

EXCLUSIVE FIRST LOOK!

Call For Duty World AT WAR

War in Australia's backyard!

SNAKE'S FINAL MISSION

Does MGS4 live up to the hype?

SOCOM: CONFRONTATION

Online warfare goes next gen OVER 20 PAGES OF REVIEWS

GAME OF 2009?
Killzone 2-creators speak

BIOSHOCK

Come to daddy! The PS3 under the sea!





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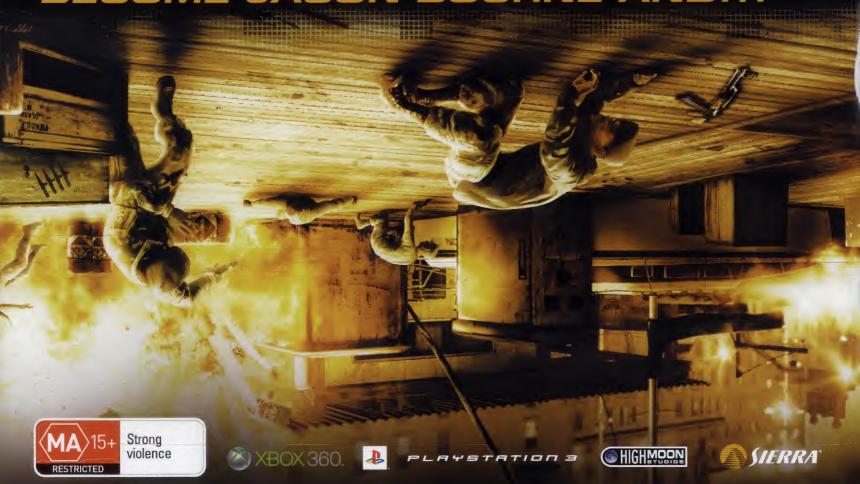
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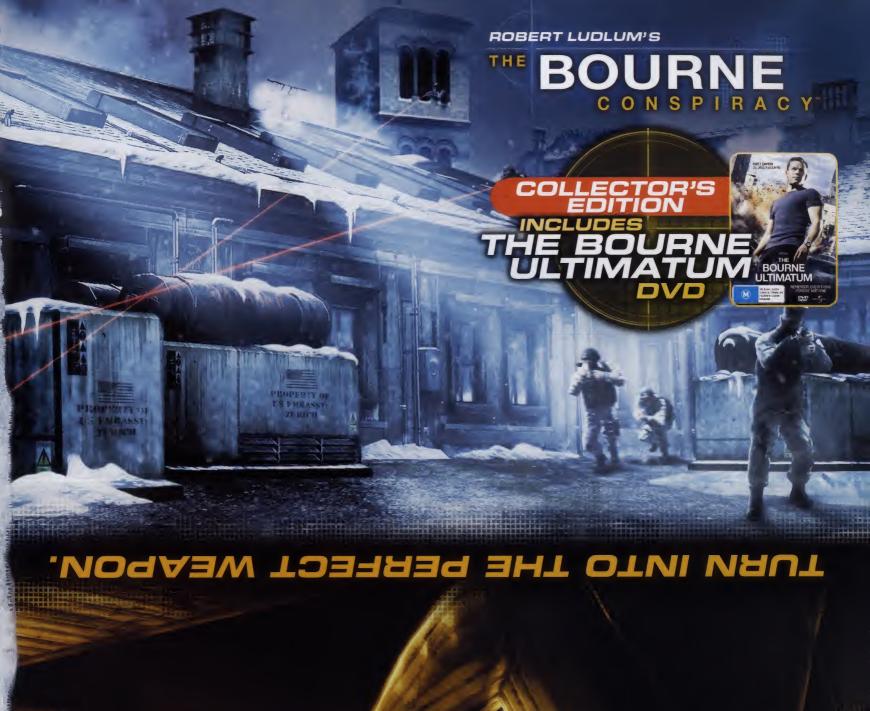


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CONTENTS





12 BUZZ

Gameplayer relaunches, we phone home, MGS4 gets bundled, Skate 2, The Force Unleashed, Resistance 2...

FEATURE



44 Bioshock

They're creepy and they're kooky. Mysterious and spooky, they're all together ooky... Daddy comes to play!

FEATURE



50 We can be Heroes!

We explore the relationship between videogames and comics AND demand more Frank Miller in the world.

FEATURE



56 Killzone 2

Is it all quiet on the Killzone 2 frontline? Or will Guerilla blow us away with their 2009 launch? They get talking.

REVIEW



78 Haze

It's on shelves and the scores are in. What happened to the game that promises so much?

REVIEW



86 Final Fantasy VII:

Big swords and bigger hair! Finally a FFVII spin-off worth looking out for. Crisis Core starts swinging the big swords.

This Month...



GH World Tour The rock war is on!



SOCOMClose quarters war!



Project Origin FPS gore!



Ferrari Challenge Leaving a blur of red!

30 PREVIEWS

- **30** Guitar Hero World Tour
- **34** SOCOM: Confrontation
- 36 Project Origin
- **38** Ferrari Challenge Trofeo Pirelli
- **41** Guitar Hero Aerosmith
- **42** Bleach: Heat the Soul 5



- 66 Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns of the Patriots
- 72 LEGO Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures
- 74 Robert Ludlum's The Bourne Conspiracy
- 76 Iron Man
- 76 Sid Meier's Civilization Revolution
- 78 Haze
- 82 Top Spin 3
- 84 SBK08
- **86** Final Fantasy VII: Crisis Core









REGULARS

008 Editor's letter012 Buzz020 Competitions

024 Letters 060 Online 065 Reviews

098

088 Film**092** Tips & Cheats**094** Database

Next Issue

CALL 136 116 AND SCORE a MGS4 Game Guide!

EDITOR'S LETTER



"...we've thrown our funds into bullets this month as we wasted suckers all over the planet!"

hat is it with games covers and big guns? "Hi there Mr. PR Man/Woman, can I have some pretty art work that will lure the gaming world to my..."

It's kinda obviously really, First Person Shooters sell consoles and hopefully, nudge, nudge, wink, wink, magazines. So, if you just ripped open the bag without forking over the cash then you owe me \$14.95, pay up already! 'Cos we've thrown our funds into bullets this month as we wasted suckers all over the planet! SOCOM, MGS4, COD5, KZ2, Bioshock, Project Origin, Haze!

It doesn't matter if you like it realistic, futuristic or sadistic, they'll throw in a gun and call it art! Who are we to question that!?

Oh wait, we're reviewers. That's our job. We bite, rip and tear at something a group of (mostly) guys has devoted their life to for a couple years. But each of us, and I am looking at Mark drooling over his *MGS4* desktop wallpaper, has games that we can't get enough of and it reminds us why we love gaming, games and our jobs! Awwwwww! Let's hug. I'm gonna go shoot the shit outta some splicers now.



PS3 online: sibernaut

"Welcome to the jungle. We got fun 'n' games. We got everything you want" – Guns N' Roses

First Person Shooters, where to from here?

MARK SERRELS

...(Solid Snake voice) When you're on the battlefield, war isn't a game. Hmmm... war is about faith. And having faith. First person shooters... have changed. War has... changed. (Ed. He's been speaking like this since his MGS4 review)
Online: Serrels



PHILLIP JORGE

I'd like to see the FPS mechanics evolve abit. Instead of pushing the analog stick around to aim why not use a magic glove with the SIXAXIS technology. To feel like its my actual limbs that you see on screen. MJ style! heee heee.

Online: PhiLLipO



ADAM MATHEW

As the sun rises in the East we gather the forces armed with every convincible bullet expelling device. Poised for action you work you way through the hoard of bodies till all you have is the ultimate weapon... a pencil!

Online: YourmumsAWESOME



DAVE KOZICKI

I was thinking of a Halo clone, throw in drop-ships and warthogs, but call 'em something different, maybe have an underground resistance, over-hype and delay it, even give it a similar title, maybe call it Haze...err.. Online: ko-zee-ii



ANDY BULMER

I'm hoping that around the end the year the universe starts to contract because I would be content to play MGS4, Killzone 2, Resistence 2 and COD4 for the first time all over again. think it works like that...



DAVID WILDGOOSE

Less violence, I think. Perhaps guns that shoot flowers. Or democracy delivered straight to the people's hearts. Awwwwl (Ed. What's with all the hugging and loving?) Online: Goose



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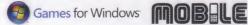
SHOUT OUTS: To the second L in Phill: Happy Birthday Dave (and Ness):: SHUT UP JASE, much love: Pack it away Kozicki:: Late nite Lennie: To having more balls (gotf) than the rest of the boys:: Roppongi















SCREENSHOT OF THE MONTH

Star Wars: The Force Unleashed forget the lightsaber for a moment and take a look at that power, this kid's the rookie. So throw that imagination of yours into how mind blowing it'll be when you get your hands on Vader's force!



Gaming's latest and greatest...

BUZZ

nome closer to opening its doors, Gameplayer relaunches, Metal Gear, Skate 2, Resistance 2 and too much more!



eems home needs a bit of tidying up before we're welcome to drop round and make ourselves comfortable.

ourselves comfortable.

With an open Beta, not launch, coming in November, the boys at Studio London begged for more time so they could move things around and made some final tweaks and add in the functionality made some final tweaks and add in the functionality that the 8,000 to 10,000 users currently on the site have been begging for.

WHY BOTHER?

Well it's quite simple. home is mos about community building and is shaping up as a good space to gather information about what's happening in the PlayStation and gaming world. Gathering 'like-minded' gamers together to form clans, organise a multiplayer game and even setting up all options for a garne, selecting the amount of players and even how many private slots that you want to keep for friends. That's all before even launching the game and we've been told it's a lot quicker than the conventional way of doing things.

EVERYTHING HAS A 'SOCIAL SPIN'

We've been told because you'll be out and about walking the streets of home that you'll bound to ramp up your friends list. Gone are the days of just deciding if you want to add someone based on tags like IMAQT or URBFF, now you can take one look at them and decide whether they're a tosser based on what they're wearing.

ADD IT UP!

at only will you be able to set up a death match, tuck into a couple of mini-games or even mindlessly talk yourself up to other avatars (can you roll your eyes in home?) but you'll also be able to take in the latest advertising. And it won't just be for videogames either! Sony is speaking to a number of advertisers to take space in home Square. To begin with there will be three dynamically changing billboards and various movie screens for companies to pimp their wares. They're also not ruling out virtual objects being built to appear in the game. "Hey buddy, have a coke! How about a Mars?" It's not all gaming people!

GAMEPLAYER RELAUNCH A whole lotta pretty

Our website, which can be found at www.gameplayer.com.au, has recently been relaunched into a content filled, community led, behemoth of a website the all of us at OPS are proud to be a part of it.

Yes, we know, shameless plug right? Well maybe, to a certain extent, but on the other hand we're really excited about creating a great Australian online community that we want you guys to be part of. From day one all of us at OPS are going to be hitting the forums, and providing regular up to date blogs on all aspects of gaming.

So if you're after the most up-to-date news from an Australian perspective there really isn't a better place to hit up online than gameplayer.com.au.

We'll be there - hope to see you online.







NEW METAL GEAR! Shiny!

And by 'gear' we mean 'stuff' ... and by 'stuff' we mean the PS3 plus Metal Gear Solid 4 bundle that Australia was reportedly not getting.

Well, guess what - now we're getting it.

As far as we know it won't be the metallic grey PS3 that the Japanese are getting (those crazy Japanese just love their different colour schemes) but the same ol' black SKU, but the deal, which includes a copy of MGS4, retails at a reasonable \$750, which saves you fifty bucks.

This was confirmed in recent Michael Ephraim interview, in which the Sony Australia top dog also confirmed that Snake's final adventure is the title he's most looking forward to, claiming that it's a game that's "gonna set new standards in gaming

We couldn't agree more Michael old boy. Couldn't agree more.

WHAT'S HOT AND WHAT'S NOT...

The MAN leave us

Bioshock PS3 About bloody time, gonna shoot Dadd Iron Man The movie! Don't get us wrong here **GH: Aerosmith** We were hoping

Indiana Jones Why George? Why? It hurt our souls.

We waited. patiently for this? **PSN Updates** Why the hell do they take so long!















HOT!

NOT!

BUZZ

INFO NUDGE

Prodding you in the ribs with all the latest newsbites...



Hurrah! Our dearly departed brethren Luke would probably have shed a tear at this news, but *Gran Turismo*, undisputedly the most popular racing sim in the gaming world, has recently sold its 50 MILLIONTH(!) copy.



As if we hadn't already seen enough cleavage on display in the all new Soulcalibur IV, those jug-fiends at Project Soul have recently announced yet another top heavy character, by the name of Shura. Will Darth Vader be forced to force choke his chicken?

TRAILING...

It's been a while since we've had any new info on Resident Evil 5, but apparently we're on the cusp of some new information. In the latest issue of the Japanese magazine 'Famitsu', there are some pics of Resident Evil payen't yet see, which makes

we haven't yet see, which makes us believe that Capcom will be showing more gameplay soon...

PRINCE OF PERSIA THIS YEAR?

Well, it's certainly a possibility. Our in-depth preview feature of *Prince of Persia*, which featured in last month's issue, had a whole lot of info – but it didn't have a release date.

But according to Ubi's release schedule, they believe it'll be ready in time for Christmas. Yeah, that's what they said about Haze...



SKATE 2 OR DIE! More broken bones

SKATE was our favourite sports game of last year by an absolute country mile, and one of our favourites of the year across any genre, so it is with great relief and anticipation that we announce that EA are in the process of developing a sequel.

As if we didn't already know...

Of course, details are scant at this early stage, but we do know that the game will not be here in time for Christmas – EA are targeting a February 2009 release at the moment. After getting in contact with EA themselves they have informed us that screenshots for this new game are a couple of months off, and that the update is more substantial than your standard annual sports update.

We have no idea what this update will entail,

THERE IS NO TRY... Yoda can you hear me?

Star Wars: The Force Unleashed is a game that has been flying under the radar as of late, but we've been a-hankering for information regarding the latest entry into the hulking *Star Wars* franchise – *Unleashed* is after all one of the first games to be released post *GTA* that also uses the Euphoria engine.

But it turns out we could be playing The Force Unleashed sooner than you think, with producer Cameron Suey claiming the he wants to try and get a demo of the game onto the PSN as soon as possible.

As the late, great Yoda once said – "do or do not. There is no try". Just get it done Cameron... make it happen.



CAN'T RESIST...

We got another chance to check out *Resistance* 2 recently, and managed to pry a couple of new bits of info regarding the game – as well as being privy to a rumour that there just might be some sort of Public Beta (ala *Metal Gear Online*).

Whoa.

Let's hope that rumour becomes reality. But regardless Ted Price, creator of the franchise was on hand to talk about the game, and let loose with some interesting info. First off – the game is becoming more social, and by that we mean that Insomniac are going to facilitate an online system that allows players to search for games with certain age groups, male or female etc. Essentially this will help you avoid hitting whiny American kids, and possibly allow sneaky fellas to get into female only games. Good times.





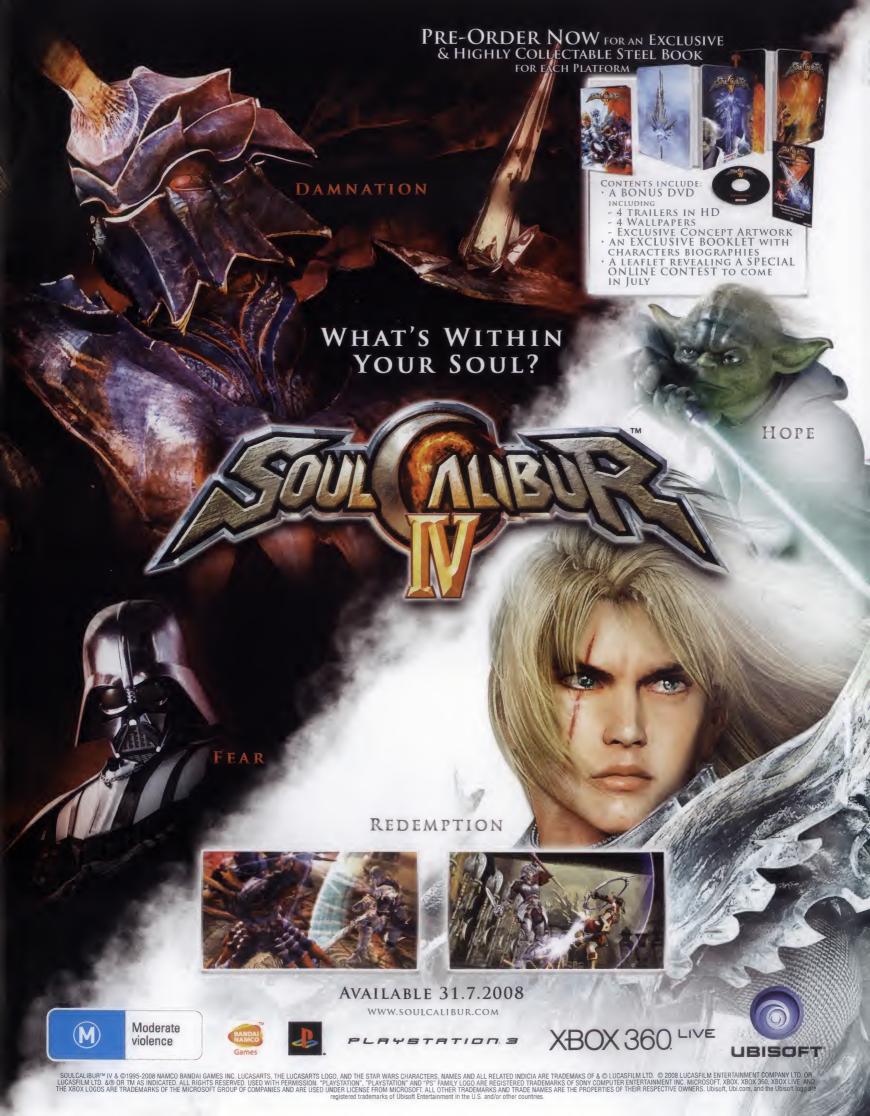
MMO...

Well, while a considerable majority of console gamers would would struggle to recite what MMO stands for (it's Massively Multiplayer Online... we think) apparently the genre which has been pretty much exclusive property of the PC crowd, a big deal with regards to the future of the PS3.

"MMOs are going to be a real strong selling point for the PS3 long term - there's going to be some great ones on the PS3" claimed Sony higher up John Smedley, citing *The Agency* as one of the titles that would demonstrate that fact.

At this stage we'll believe it when we see it — but we're hopeful that this thriving genre will find its feet on the PlayStation 3 in the near future.





TOP 10 GAMES CHART







Rank	Title	Category	Distributor
	Call of Duty 4	Shooter	Activision
	Assassin's Creed	Action	Ubisoft
	Guitar Hero III: Legends of Rock		Activision
	FIFA 08	Sport	EA
	Iron Man	Action	SEGA
	SingStar	Music	Sony
10	Fight Night 3	Sport	EA

COMING SOON



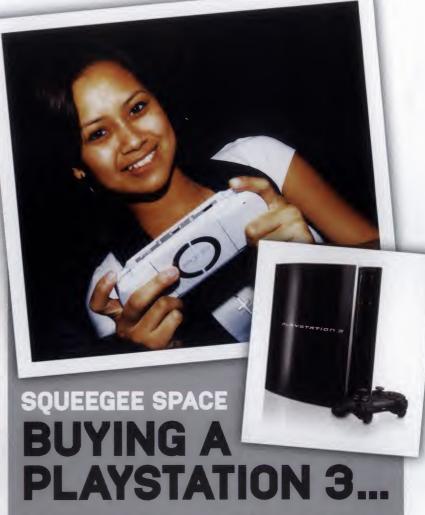




Format	Title	Category	Distributor
JUNE			
PS3	NFL Tour	Sports	EA
PS3	LEGO Indiana Jones	Adventure	Activision
PS3	Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns of the Patriots		Atari
PS3	Sid Meier's Civilization Revolution	Strategy	

JULT			
PS3	Soulcalibur IV	Fighting	Ubisoft
PS3	Buzz! Master Quiz	Trivia	Sony
PS2	Alone in the Dark	Action	Atari
PSP	Secret Agent Clank	Action	Sony

100			
PS3	Mercenaries 2: World in Flames	Action	THQ
PS3	Alone in the Dark	Action	Atari
PS3	Tales of the Abyss	Action	TBC
PS3	Battlefield: Bad Company	FPS	EA
PS3	Brothers in Arms: Hell's Highway	Tactical FPS	Ubisoft
PS3	Midnight Club: Los Angeles	Racing	Rocksta
PS3	LittleBigPlanet	Action	Sony
PS3	Resistance 2	FPS	Sony
PS3	MotorStorm 2	Racing	Sony



Here are the two dilemmas I face when making a purchase: one, I hate spending heaps, secondly, I can't haggle. Now I don't mean I can't haggle as in I have an innate instinct that prohibits the act, far from it. No, I mean that when I try to haggle, the store owner (or the clerk, or whoever) will always, always, do the following: raise his eyebrow, look me up and down and smirk. It's the smirk that signals Game Over.

Oh! what to do, what to do. I mean, I hardly blame the sales attendants. Would you haggle with a girl whose head barely reaches your elbow? (Ok, I exaggerate, but its not too far from the truth!)

Knowing that the purchasing of all things Playstation was near, I complained to a few guys about my dilemma. Yes, I got the smirk from them too, but not without some words of wisdom. "Show a little cleavage" they suggested. "That'll get you a better deal than that hard-ass boyfriend of yours."

Why?! Why'd you listen to them Squeegee? Groaning and rolling my eyes as we went into the fifth store that day ! felt like a complete idiot. Not one of the guys had spoken to me about the PS3 I was about to purchase. Nor did they speak to me about the PSP I was to gain in the very same transaction. They didn't even look at me! How insignificant does it make you feel when you, the potential purchaser of the goods, aren't acknowledged? I thought money was power? Should I really be complaining? I mean, I got the PSP and PS3, scored a free controller and some games... That's all that matters, right?





what's next for our favourite games? WHERE TO NOW?

From Cloud and co.'s big-headed adventure through Midgar in '97, to the high drama of Tidus and Yuna's quest to vanquish Sin, to FFXII's unprecedented new directions, we've seen this much-loved RPG series rocket from strength to strength over the years. With Final Fantasy XIII about to crash the party, we feel the time is right to take a look at what's been done and what might be to come...



STAPLE WHAT WE WANT LIKELIHOOD? **HOW IT'S BEEN** WHY IT SHOULD CHANGE Besides striking a delicate A wider audience has FF fans still debate the ins and outs of balance between interesting charged, Final Fantasy's storytelling FFVII's sprawling ambiguities - they're come to know and is rarely anything less than affecting a clever bunch, and there's no need yet intelligible, it's the little but has gone from the challenging things. Remember Zidane and but a sullen Squall for Square-Enix to adopt a more complexity of FFVII to the more Vivi bonding over an outdoor says, "Good idea." Question is, did they straight-forward, Hollywood-style stage of the game. Keep it cerebral. nighttime wee together in STORYLINE hubbub of FFXII FFIX? Awww. hear him mumble? A little less lovin' in the house at the core of things that tends to draw and a less typical, more real, and by the looks of perfectly-written people are the her, she's not one for butter on its bread. Even minor and maybe even controversial This coupled with a recent string of approach to who's who. A sensitive diatribes. effeminate leading males like Tidus and Cid lights up a stogie and gives this one a few cliched types (the angst-ridden Vaan is a well-worn pattern that could affection for Chocobos? Er CHARACTERISATION do with some switching up. okav. mavbe not. hero, the grizzled warrior, etc.). More than three members of Up until the real-time tonking of direction, but was a little too automatic your party able to participate in to be taking an to feel entirely satisfying. The characters battle, a revamped elemental increasingly more affair set off by grating random same weapons and techs as each other so with any luck we'll reliant on the character who be seeing a lot of refinement in FFXIII. distinguish any of them in combat. summoned them staying alive **COMBAT SYSTEM** More unique levelling up Square-Enix have There's been a few different ways almost definitely taken of levelling up and gaining skills flawed because the board was the between characters with the same for every single character, which ability to cross over into other a few notes, and 0 0 character's skill-sets during they're no slouches premise of earning experience enough along little Penelo would be points primarily through punching the later game, which FFX's when it comes to hitting as hard as Basch, Whacky, excellent Sphere Grid achieved trying crazy new on with enemes remains consistent **LEVELLING UP** quite nicely. If it ain't broke. things in this respect. across the series Like the risk Square-Enix ran Trumping the legacy the infamy of FFVII's Sephiroth, and that of Sephiroth so



and an impossibly sinister, overarching villain with more agendas than Tifa has ill-fitting bras, FF does a roaring trade in providing

dude was stabbing flower girls over conflicted baddy that you really want to strange, sympathy/empathy for

Aeris was killed off for good, a similar gamble should be taken with FFXIII. What if the main character became the primary villain? Be original Squenix

firmly ingrained in FF fanbovs will be tough. but all it'd take is a did back in '97.



THE CHICKS

and FF's female stars are most and dressed in utterly inappropriate and perve-friendly outfits (has anyone ever actually looked at

It really shouldn't. Call us sad, call us twisted, just call us because we're defining short-shorts and Rikku's skimpy little yellow bikini outfit are examples of onscreen hotness we don't

While we wonder how Ashe even manages to walk anywhere without flashing more lovely lasses present in impractical and revealing gear the better for everyone

Ever since FFX-2's risque riot girls, FF's ladies have just been wearing less and less. FFXIII's main chick looks like she means business though



SOUNDTRACK

When fabled FF composer Nobuo Uematsu was behind the music. there wasn't a score that didn't compel you to pick up the OST from an import store and not know what any of the tracks were called Ol' Nobuo broke away from Square-Enix in '04 and things haven't quite been the same sound-wise since. The painfully traditional orchestral pieces so non-descript as to be immediately

Nobuo! Come back! Stop drinking so much!

sob... sob...

silence.

It doesn't look as if the great man will be returning - we can just hear a horribly pumping electronica soundtrack in the works...



Your chance to WIN it all...

COMPS

HOW TO ENTER

Send entries to ops@derwenthoward.com.au with the name of the competition in the subject lime, or post them to OPS Magazine, PO Box 1037, Bondi Junction, NSW 1355 with the name of the competition CLEARLY MARKED on the envelope. Alternatively, head to www.gameplayer.com.au for details. Include the name of the competition, your rame, age, email address, contact number, and more importantly, your full address and postcode! All competitions close on June 18th. All competitions are open to residents of Australia and New Zealand.

JUMPING JACK FLASH

David Rice (played by

Hayden Christiansen) is a 'Jumper', meaning he has the ability to transport himself through space at will. While this enables him to become a wealthy man, after robbing a bank without even being seen, it inevitably causes him trouble in the long run.

Because Roland Cox (Samuel L. Jackson) the leader of the Paladins (a group created to hunt down and kill jumpers) has David in his sights. What follows is a titanic battle, as the girl David loves is drawn into the crossfire.

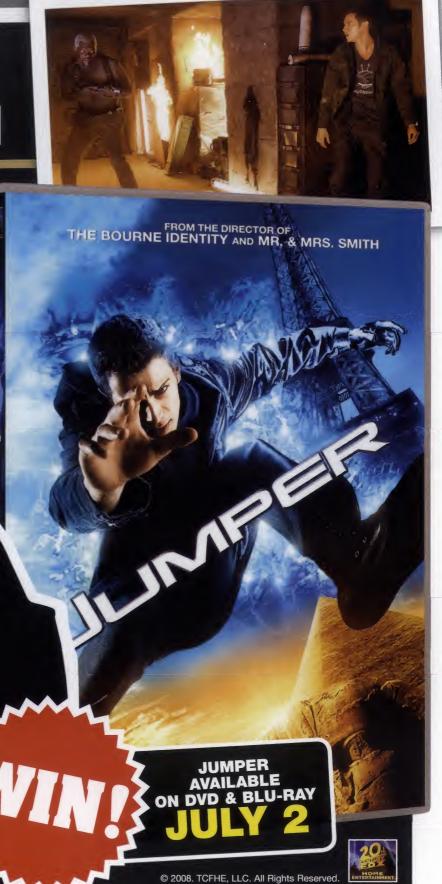
This is the main premise of *Jumper*, the latest action blockbuster from Doug Liman, previously responsible for movies such as *The Bourne Identity, Mr. & Mrs. Smith*, and *Swingers*. A fascinating twist

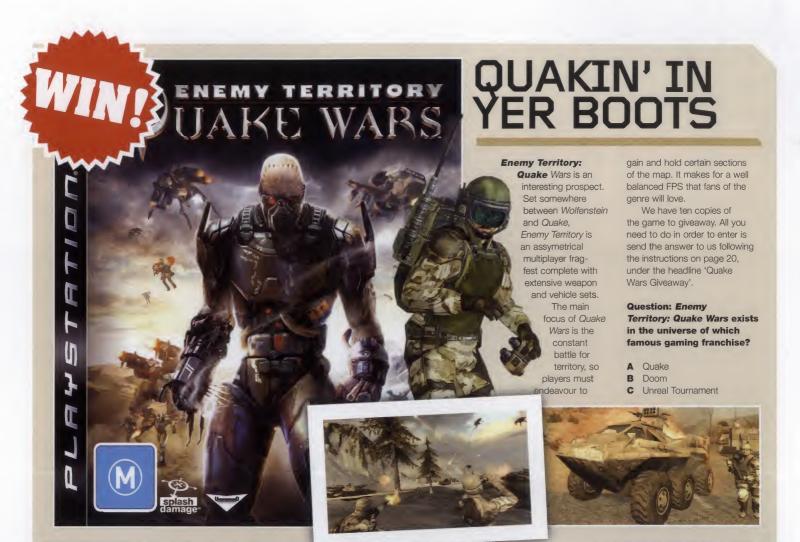
on the action genre, *Jumper* is packed with innovative fight scenes and various gorgeous locales.

We have 15 copies of Jumper to giveaway, along with 15 stylish Jumper hoodies as part of the package. All that's required is a simple answer to a simple question. Then send said answer to us following the instructions on page 20, under the tagline 'Jumper giveaway'.

Question: Jumper star Hayden Christiansen put in a patchy performance in which world famous franchise?

- A Die Hard
- B Indiana Jones
- C Star Wars







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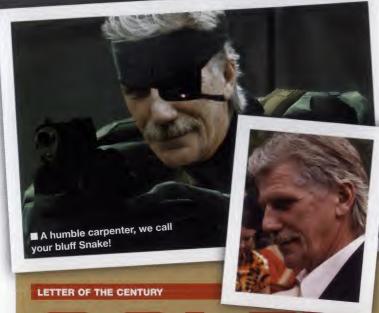
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LETTERS



SOLID

ey OPS, my name is Alastair. I own a PS3 and have owned every PlayStation since the PSX. I bought my own PSX back in about 1998 – I was young and had to save hard, because my folks were against gaming and television and all that commercial stuff that came on the "Idiot Box" as dad called it. So against my parent's ideals I bought my first PlayStation and was the happiest kid on earth. I had a small collection of games including *Driver*, *Soul Reaver* and *Metal Gear Solid*.

Now that brings me to the interesting part.

Metal Gear Solid - Or more to the point MGS4. I have a brother and he got married recently, so I was at the wedding and there were lots of family members about, some of which I had not seen for years. One man in particular caught my attention. An uncle of mine that had aged considerably since I last saw him - maybe more than ten years.

I looked at him and thought "I recognise that face" and not just as the

face of my aged uncle.

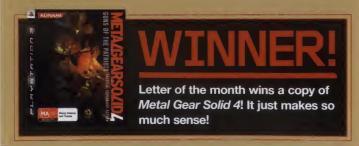
Then it dawned on me and I found myself thinking... Snake... Solid Snake? Snake...what happened... Snake... SSNNNAAAAKE!"

I had my camera with me and snapped a few shots – here are some of them.

So there you have it! Solid Snake in real life! Although my uncle is not a badass stealth killer, he's just a humble camenter.

Alastair, via email.

To call this Letter of the Month would be an disservice to the most perfect example of correspondence I've ever encountered. When I started reading I was cynical, expecting the look-a-like to be functional at best. Little did I know I would soon be looking into the eyes of Solid Snake. Absolutely unbelievable – even his hair seems to mimic the textures in MGS4. And Alastair – you're uncle may be 'just' carpenter, but don't forget that Jesus was also a practitioner of this dying art. But he was no Solid Snake...





NEVERENDING STORY

I just came up with something. Actually I came up with it ages ago, then forgot it. You know how games have different storylines depending on decisions you make, and the way you play? I think sequels to games like that should read your save game from the previous one, and continue from it. I mean, imagine what it would be like in *Oblivion*, if you could choose to help Martin, or hand him to the Mythic Dawn and turn evil, and *TES 5* had you playing as a Dremora, or a mortal of some kind living in the post-armageddon world that Dagon created?

It would be incredible, because your ingame decisions would really have an effect on how everything turns out.

PS: How awesome is *GTA4?* It just gets better the more you play it!

Bryce Carr, via email

As good an idea as this is, we had a complete headache trying to figure out how such an idea could possibly work. The sequel would have to be on the same console from the kick-off, and be using the same engine. But, to a certain extent, Expansion Packs and Downloadable Content fulfil plenty of the things you're describing here, and to be honest, when an entirely new game comes out we kinda prefer to start from scratch.

WORSE THAN...

Your rating system is really quite a good one but there is a category that I was disappointed not to see in the new OPS magazine. The Better than, Worse than category and it would be needed now more than it was back in the days of the OPS2 magazine. Many of the popular PS2 games are moving to the PS3 and it would be nice to know if they are any better than their PS2 counterparts. Now I understand that it may be difficult to make an accurate comparison as they are on different consoles but if you take away all of the things that the PS3 allows it to do such as the graphics and imagine what the game would be like if it were on PS2. I know that it may prove to be very hard to do but you have actually already done this in your review of DMC4 as you said that it might be like Star Trek because all of the even numbered ones were bad and the odd numbered ones were good. But in order for you to say that, you had to make a comparison between the DMC's on PS2 and the one on PS3 so that you're able to make a comparisons between PS2 and PS3 games. Basically, I'd like to see the Better than, Worse than category return.

Corey, via email

Hey dudeski – we too enjoyed the Better than, Worse than section of reviews, and feel that it was a legitimate way to give

gamers an idea of what games to buy, but it was really subjective – some people just prefer different games. That being said, we're in the process of re-designing the magazine, so we may just bring it back.





FRAGFEST

I've just got a question for you wise people at the Official PlayStation Towers. Firstly, as most people know, console hardware is getting so powerful that they are built and run more like PCs than ever before, particularly with the advent of game installations to the HDD. This can bring some problems with it that the PS3 currently has no way of alleviating. I am talking about disc fragmentation. The more demos, trailers, game installations etc. that people store on their PS3's hard drive, the more fragmented the files will become, thus reducing system performance for the more HDD intensive games (eg, Oblivion, GTAIV). The easy way to fix this, as all PC's have and use, is a HDD defragmentation software. Currently the PS3 has no such application, and it could prove to be a problem for performance once people really fill up their HDD's. The alternative is to reformat the hard drive, but in doing so, you obviously lose all your precious data (particularly game saves), though you can back them up. The thing is, the common PS3 user will have no knowledge on how to do that. So, are Sony going to implement a HDD defragmenter in say, an upcoming firmware update?

Lance Millan, via email

The implication of a PS3 HDD defragmentation program is a possibility, but probably unnecessary. According to our (extremely) rudimentary understanding of the PS3's hardware, the hard drive set up is completely different from a PC's, and there isn't a real need to defrag the HDD. That being said, you probably could connect the PS3's HDD to a regular PC and defrag it that way – but we wouldn't recommend doing so...

BROKEN...

Hey dudes, great mag of course. But I would like to tell you about my issues with the fantastic game Guitar Hero III. Now, I really like this game, plenty of great tracks and it introduced me to some bands I like that I've never heard of before, like Dragonforce and Slayer. But one thing that really sucks with the game is the horrible controller. It just feels like a piece of plastic Fisher Price crap. It's just so God damn tacky. And since when did guitars have buttons on them. I thought it had strings. Anyway the main thing that sucks with the guitar is the buttons. Most buttons should be able to handle millions of applications. But these damn buttons can't even handle thousands of presses. I mean I'm pretty good at the game. And I press the button and strum but the game doesn't pick it

up, it's so bloody annoying. It's like the fret buttons have their own on and off switch. As I'm sure you can understand it's incredibly frustrating. So damn frustrating that I almost ripped the lights out of the ceiling with the strap. And I'm sure I'm not the only *GHIII* player that suffers this problem. I doubt we would see much improvement with the 4th game. And I hope the *Rock Band* controllers aren't as bad or worse...

Josef Barker WA

Hey Josef, to be perfectly honest we've had minimal problems when it comes to the Guitar Hero controllers – it's possible that you have simply been 'rockin' a little too hard with the thing. If buttons aren't working, maybe you should get in contact with Activision and see if you can get that sucka repaired. And erm, the Rock Band guitars? Well... about that – while the game is incredible we found that the Rock Band guitars were far less responsive that their Guitar Hero counterparts. So if you don't like the GH ones, you're probably going to loathe and despise the Rock Band ones...



CUTTINGS

Delicious bite-sized letter morsels that are easy to swallow

MONEY MONEY MONEY

When in PlayStation Home, are you going to have to use real money, via credit card, or will it all be free?

From what we can garner, some things will be free in Home, but there will be some content that you'll have to pay for. It'll work much like the PlayStation Store does now, times a million.

MAYBE!

Hi, can you do a feature on all the websites in GTA IV.

Alexander Garner, via email

Maybe

COLOUR

What's your favourite colour?

James, via email

Raloo!

KILLING TIME?

So what is the deal? I thought Killzone 2 was coming out this year, but now I'm hearing it's been delayed until 2009? What's the go?

Eric, via email

Erm, yeah. On that count you would be correct. Killzone 2 has been delayed until Feb 2009. Apparently, it's nothing to do with development, but simply because Sony don't want it to clash with the release of Resistance 2.

KRISPY KREMES

What's your flavour? Tell me what's

Phil, via email

Glazed, baby. All the way.

WINNERS

FROM THE COMPS IN OPS #15

Turning point: Jake O'Brien, John Mikhail, E Northover, Brigette Randell, Julie A Krause, Graham James, Cindy Hughes, Stephen French, Troy Kanterly

30 days of night: Corey Winzil, D. Scott, Brigitte Randall, Phen French, Michael Wilson, Michael Leslie, Michaela Wiegmann, Tom Keegan.

Brad Pitt: Aaron Hoffmeister, Jason

Murphy, Andrew Martin, D Martin, Rod George, Michael Leslie, E Northover, Cindy Hughes, Rocco Raso, David Friend

Condemned 2: Will Kissas, John Mikhail, Michael Wilson, Stacey Cooper, Matthew Hargraves, Dee Glen, Jason Eagles, Daniel Scuteri,

FROM THE COMPS IN OPS #16

Unreal: Kristy Hawkins, Brett Gabel, Chanelle Avison, Sandi Aranui, Jason

Soeun, Melanie Porta, Danielle Woolley, Trudy Coles, Phen French,

Great Balls of fury: Donnalene Aitchison, D. Tyrrell, Kristy Hawkins, Norman Camarda, L Williams, Brian Osborne, Phillip Cunningham, Simone Martin, Chris Freer, Pat Masterson, Albert Tjahyadi, James Green,

Odin sphere: Georgia Reid, Benita Green, D Scott, Cindy Hughes, Danielle Woolley

Beowulf: Kerne Paulger, Matthew Hargraves, Mark J Clancy, Matthew Arnott, Kris Harringer, Cameron Dean, Luke James, Max Johnson.

FROM THE COMPS

IN OPS #17

Hitman: Keith Anderson. Robert Wegrecki. Vince Cantarell. Scott Cannan. Ryan Harman, Ashley Hoffman, Sab Atino, Matthew Arnott, Jamie Carnovale, Joshua Roberts.

AvP2: Mitch Doddrell, Keith Anderson, Pat Masterson, Dominik Wegrecki, Scott Cannan, Lynette Brown, Phillip Cunningham, Stephen Fisher, T Phan, A higgins

Vegas 2: Brent Fletcher, Blake Walsh, L Williams, Peter Tzannes, John Mikhail, Nichlos Maguire, Albert Tjahyadi, ashley hoffman, Sam Pearson, Julie A Krause.

*ADDITIONAL WINNERS CONTACTED VIA EMAIL





itchy grenade pin finger - and upper-

holds selfless acts of suicidal bravery in the very highest regard, and as a result





Nazis back toward Berlin. Now, before anybody can start pissing and moaning about "yet another WWII shooter", we should all realize two important things; WAW runs on the eyeball searing COD4 engine, and secondly that WWII is still an untapped goldmine in terms of action material. Just as Call of Duty 4 managed to breathe life into a similarly over-represented genre (FPSs set in the modern day), Treyarch hopes to repeat the awesomeness with the WWII setting. According to the team "we're not just going back to WWII, we're totally redefining it in a fresh way." Not an easy task, but it is something they could very well achieve with the chaotic, irregular guerilla nature of the Pacific theatre.

The Japanese were also very cunning enemies who, in addition to their "never-say-die-until-we-bothdie" attitudes, were very inventive soldiers and during our demo we were constantly surprised by their left-field tactics. Just like historical, eye-witness accounts, the enemies we faced relied heavily upon surprise sniping attacks from trees, playing dead and then springing to murderous life when we drew near, and they weren't against stringing up the mutilated corpses of our captured comrades to further freak us out. Unlike previous Call of Duty games there's a survival horror intensity to WAW, and when you compare the usual tactics used in European battles

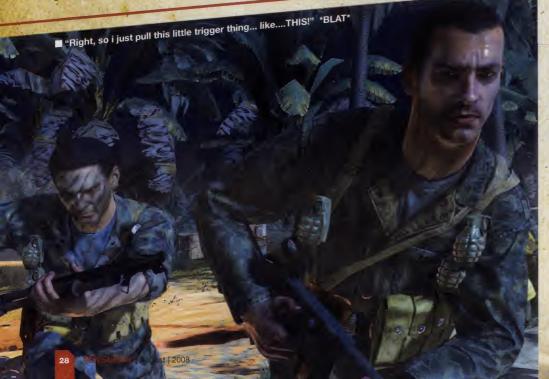
to the tropical nightmare of the Pacific

it's like comparing Nazi apples with
kamikaze oranges.

PYROMANIACS, YOU VE FOUND YOUR GRACELAND

You won't spend all your time on the backfoot though. Unperturbed by the fanatical, ambush-happy antics of their enemy, the Americans countered by equipping their troops (i.e. you) with the mother of all weapons; the flamethrower. Cruising around in WAW with a seventy pound tank full of fuel and a full thirty metres worth of flame is something you really need to experience. Use of fire has been made a very important facet of WAW, and Treyarch has gone

to surprising lengths to code a new degree of fire destructibility into the existing COD4 engine. Triggering your flamethrower will spew a gout of jellied fire that can torch huts, long grass, and even trees to flush out Japanese sappers and snipers. Much like the movie Backdraft, the fire on display here was a reactive animal that hungrily leapt off smoldering enemies to ignite nearby vegetation - something we used to create walls of flame to prevent ourselves getting flanked. Apparently this focus on fire is carried forward in the Russian half of the campaign too, where you'll have access to Molotov cocktails and the unholy horror that is the Russian firetank. Crispy Krauts, coming right up.









Speaking of awesome vehicles, in the US campaign you'll have a brief stint as a gunner aboard a PBY Catalina - a flying boat bristling with 50 cal guns that was primarily designed for rescue missions. Flying aboard this beast during an interdiction mission on a merchant fleet, we were strafing ships at a crazily low altitude - well within the tracer bullet range of some very pissed off Japanese patrol boats. It was a scene of pure chaos as we had to regularly switch across between the two aft machine guns to the gun on the bow. Which is easier than it sounds, because to do this switch it meant a hectic, claustrophobic journey through the belly of the intricately detailed aircraft. Once we were correctly

positioned the murderising continued in beautiful unabated fashion - our bullets slashed through the waves, enemy tracers sizzled past us into the night sky, and once the oil spilled from the target vessels everything ignited with thick plumes of black smoke...

NEXT GEN MOSQUITOS AND FROGS. SORTED.

WAW is no slouch when it comes to sound Treyarch have garnered many awards for their innovative use of sound in Call of Duty 3 and they're using this previous experience in the new engine to make this outing an absolute aural treat. Walking around the levels with the lead sound designer, we were mightily impressed with the degree of detail that

Treyarch have gone to in terms of spatial ambient noise. The surf sloshes against the shore, individual mosquitos and crickets assail your ears in the steamy jungles, and the wind will whistle past your ears when you're on the mountain trails. Hell, they've even gone to the point of recorded some imported frogs from the Pacific region. Honestly, we haven't experienced aural pleasure this satisfying since our last trip to Thailand (yeah, we spelt that right, they had a totally sweet sound system in the hotel) and WAW should definitely be a showcase for that expensive Dolby setup.

All in all Call of Duty: World at War is shaping up very well indeed. Treyarch already have their hands on a truly

impressive visual engine, which should mean that they can devote themselves to crafting plot, dialogue and satisfying gameplay. Having said that, the visuals probably won't be a massive leap beyond COD4 but they have made inroads with better sound design, more comprehensive destructibility, and an awe-inspiring fire system. We marched away from our Pacific soiree quite impressed with what we saw, but only time will tell if they'll be able to change the formula enough to appease the ever growing WWII whingers who have had enough of the 'big one' and are looking for something different. Whatever the case, we will intercept any telegraphed communiqués, and we'll keep you posted.





BURN BABY BURN

Call of Duty: World at War will offer 'jump in' cooperative play for the single-player campaign, with either two people local play or four people through the PlayStation network. In co-op mode you will be offered additional challenges which, once completed, will afford you better equipment and other unlockables in the various different modes of the game.

There will of course be the usual award-winning adversarial mode seen in COD4, but it has been expanded to include a variety of medium vehicles (tanks, troop carriers) and light vehicles (jeeps, amphibious jeeps). To keep things balanced certain maps will be designed purely for infantry only play and there will be vehicle specific multiplayer modes. The only thing that concerns us at this point is the balancing issues that will arise from multiple maniacs packing flamethrowers...





GUITAR HERO WORLD TOUR

The rock war is on!

hen the first few towering rifts of Welcome to the Jungle announce themselves to a receptive eardrum most would visualise a sashaying red headed rocker kitted up in regulation bandanna and pants so tight that he was guaranteed never to have children, thankfully! But for a new generation of gamers their fingers curl at the ready as they tap out a message with meaning and purpose.

So with addicts all over the world why would RedOctane change the formula?

We've bought their guitars, we're

ready for the downloads and eager for the fresh new discs with unbeatable classics like Through the Fire and Flames (Dragonforce) and The Devil Went Down To Georgia (Steve Ouimette), we'll even play them on expect and fail miserably.

So, even though we're yet to shell out on Rock Band like the rest of the world, why should we make room for this new set of peripherals?

AND A SET OF STEAK KNIVES!

The peripheral world continues to steal from each other, Guitar Hero



borrowed from the Konami J-Pop classic GuitarFreaks, Harmonix split from Activision to produce Rock Band and now comes Guitar Hero World Tour. Of course it doesn't stop there. Konami has announced Rock Revolution and why not it's had the whole drum thing wrapped up since 1999 with DrumMania.

Well as you're probably aware Guitar Hero World Tour will not only be about rockin' out on guitars but will be about joining with friends to form a band, a rock band if you so choose. Maybe Folk, if you're that way inclined.

Let's start with the guitars. No, they're not going to be the same but just in a new shade of red. Whether that means you'll have to upgrade to play the game is yet to be seen but the new wireless "more responsive" controllers will have a new digital slide bar on the neck and a new Star Power Bar.

The Drums, while Harmonix did open up access to their kit, RedOctane have created a set up, also wireless with three drum pads, two raised cymbals and a bass kick pedal. Different, yes, innovative, not so much! What they've done that

will affect gameplay is to add 'velocity sensitivity'. What that means is that if you bash that sucker hard you'll produce a heavier sound, tap lightly and you'll sound like a limp-wristed girl. The 'soft rubber construction' is also meant to give great bounce back and they can be packed up to a nice small bundle.

PROMISES, PROMISES

Not that we're jaded or anything but when you announce you're going to have the 'largest on-disc set list in a music-rhythm game-to-date', then we start to expect

some pretty big things especially when you're digging into the master recordings for the good stuff. Throwing around names like Van Halen, Linkin Park, The Eagles and Sublime would get anyone excited but when you've come to expect tunes that pull the inner rock god out of you making you a menace on a Gibson, a titillating collection of '80s, '90s and the real classic rock are what's gonna have us foaming at the mouth and handing over the hundreds of dollars this package

While we got to see a member of the team Beat it through an unannounced track. RedOctane have also rolled out some well known drummers to pimp the untested feature of the arsenal and declare it a good bash. Travis Barker of Blink 182 fame has been showcased recording the motion capture for the game, Chad Smith's appearance would lead us to believe that the Red Hot Chilli Peppers may come to the party with a song and The Police's Stewart Copeland threw his fists into the discussion about how well the drum kit feels. They even got some sweet lines out of these masterful bashers like "as real as you can get from a videogame". Hell that impresses us!

But the fact that record companies themselves want to let people know they are linked to the project, such as Fearless Record announcing that At The Drive-ins' 'One Armed Scissor' will be in GHWT, well that shows not only the power of videogame but of the Guitar Hero brand.

BUT IT'S A GAME

So the names are there and people are digging the package but what about the gameplay?

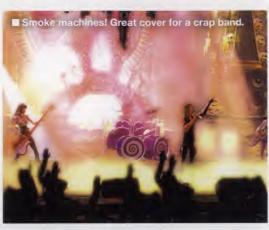
Firstly, there will be a full individual career mode as in past games and band career mode, similar to Rock Band's 'cough' World Tour mode. Plus a four verses four online war mode where you can compete against local gamers band on band with the oddly familiar name of Battle of the Bands.

But where Guitar Hero World Tour really differentiates its self is with the Music Studio feature.

Taking the player from the role of

"...kitted up in regulation bandanna and pants so tight that he was guaranteed never to have children,













WHAT THEY LEFT OUT

There was a mystery feature that you won't find in the final package that we got a little look-see at. Jam Over let you take a song and play the notes you wanted, whether this was just to make it easier for yourself or to throw a little of your own flair in there. Either way... Maybe Guitar Hero X will see it introduced!









rhythmic button masher to music creator, Music Studio will let the player compose, record and edit songs then share the creation with the music community online. This opens up a world of new possibilities including your own spin on a classic. the theme to every game ever released and 'original' tracks. Can you say Guitar Hero band launch party!? Because just as MySingStar is dragging shy retiring gamers out of the closest and online to flash their wares, GHWT promises to uncover unsigned bands and have others 'discovering' talents. We're likely to see the Tune of the Month, Top downloaded, Top rated the list is endless

Music Studio lets you set the scale, six in all, that the band or individual bands will play in.

Just as music programming software set markers defining or highlighting sections of the song. You can set loops, review section by section and even throw on a different sound - acoustic, rock etc. Note nudge will even let you push a beat into the right place. What we'd like to

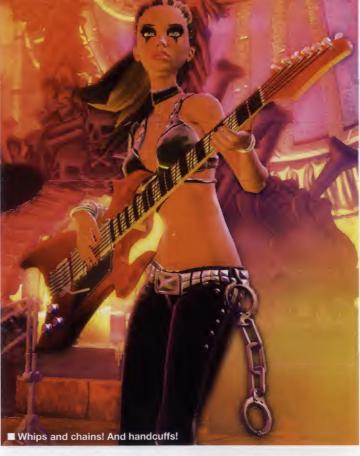
see but is yet to be discussed is whether sampling or the mic will be able to feed into the studio package.

REDOCTANE MUSIC PUBLISHER?

If mixing your own tracks isn't enough to get you to form a band and aim for the money, the ability to customise everything in the game will. Yeah, yeah everything, that big word that gets thrown around but you'll always find something isn't in there, which means that perhaps a less inclusive word should have been selected.

However, we can't find anything that they've left out. After selecting a name. you'll be able to make yourself look like a right rocker, changing every aspect of the new you in Create a Rocker. From face, body type and clothing to tattoos (you can create or upload), make up and then you'll move on to your instruments.

Before doing so you might want to design your band logo just to get it thrown on your body for a bit of added advertising. Hell, what's a drum kit without



the band logo shouting out how truly unique you really are.

Once you're touring though you'll want to get the album cover up, set the bands music genre and well... wait with your Music Studio tracks, it's all too easy to see yourself on stage pleasing the world one music fan at a time. Via downloads!

With Motley Crue placing its latest single, Saints of Los Angeles for sale on both iTunes and Rock Band before its release date on June 24 and receiving a staggering 47,000 in the first week from the game with only 10,000 on iTunes, gaming and music are finding a new expanding partnership.

Whether it's about making music or making a great game what we most want to see is the game get a release here 'around' the same time as the rest of the world. You never know at this rate it may just be the first BAND game to hit our shores with both games throwing around a release date for 'late' 2008. We are ready to roooooock! 🕹 Vanessa Morgan

BOTTOM LINE

Music Studio feature Better quality instruments How long do we have to wait?

OPS is...

buying leather pants

THE OFFICIAL VIDEOGAME

SUPERBIKE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP **RACING INTO STORES THIS JUNE!**



or 1 of 10 SBK08 games!*



.AYSTATION.3

PlayStation_®2







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SOCOM: CONFRONTATION

Get ready for an online war zone

hen we first started hearing about this whole online revolution. and online only battlefields like Warhawk opening up, our initial response was "those bastards gypped us again!" How dare Sony try to sell us a full priced game that was only supported over the interweb. We felt rorted, at least until we played that sucker. Now it's become one of our favourite games of all time. There's something about duking it out with real people that will never be matched by A.I., no matter how advanced the technology gets. It's the extreme unpredictability of your fellow man/woman that makes this type of game so appealing. Sony ain't no fools. They know when they're onto a winner. So gear up and get ready to

move out to a brand new type on conflict as SOCOM makes it way all shiny and new to next gen, all solely online in SOCOM: Confrontation.

LIKE A KID IN A CANDY STORE

When we started running down the list of what they've got in store for us, we were rubbing our hands with glee, giggling like a pack of Japanese schoolgirls. It was like the old Demtel commercials. Every time we thought we'd seen it all, Slant Six looked at us and said "but wait...there's more", and they weren't kidding. They want to make this a very intimate affair, so they're not going for ridiculously huge maps that take a week to get across, in fact, the largest will only be about twice the size of

maps available in previous versions leading to a lot of close quarters combat. New to the series is the inclusion of a sprinting mechanic and armour. The sprinting is a bit of a double-edged sword, as you are completely vulnerable to fire, and don't have the ability to get a shot off mid-sprint. We see it becoming a bit of a harried crapshoot, as you decide whether or not to break cover and reach that abandoned car across the road and out-flank the enemy, or sit and wait it out like a little girly-man (you blouse). The armour intrigues us, as there is a definite weight to speed ratio. The more armour you have on, the better protected you are (obviously), but you trade off mobility, which could lead to your demise. It's a real six of one, half dozen

the other scenario, and should really lead to some epic skirmishes. We've also been told that a knife has been included so you can get some nasty up close and personal melee attacks on, and we know you're all fans of a little slice and dice.

THAT WORKS, ON SO MANY LEVELS

You might be wondering, with all this talk of compact little battle zones, will there still be room for a bit of snipering action? You bet you sweet ass there will be. Choose the high or low ground. The maps have been carefully constructed so that if you want to get down and dirty on the ground, go for it. There'll be plenty of barrels and abandoned cars for you to creep around



and hide behind as your eye out your next victim. The whole deal is to make it a sneak fest on the ground as you try to outmanoeuvre your enemies and come in for the kill. However, once you leave the ground, the rooftop sniper battles should provide a tense counterpoint to the intense action below. The whole key was to make long range kills a nice addition to the gameplay, as opposed to a defining dominating feature. It's a trade-off but we feel they've got the balance just right.

ENOUGH WITH THE TALKETY-TALK

It should be of no surprise that communication within teams will be paramount. It really sets a clan apart, and you can see and feel it immediately. You'll be silently moving about, thinking, "I can't believe no-one's seen us" and BLAM!! A sniper takes your head off, three dudes materialise out of no-where and axe the remainder of your team before you can even utter "what the?" SOCOM: Confrontation takes it up a notch. As you'd expect, you can only hear your own team speak UNLESS they happen to be near you. That's right! You can eavesdrop on any conversation the opposition are having, if you happen to be close enough. It's a brilliant idea. Just think about the enemy totally secure in whispering their

I WAS TRAINED BY THE BEST...BRITISH INTELLIGENCE



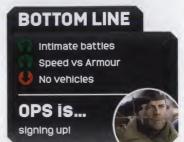
When you get your clan together, before you get kitted out, ready to kick ass and take names, you'll need to work out which Special Forces Unit you hail from. You can choose from "Hoo-rah America" Navy SEALs, the daring British SAS, ze German KSK, the Unidad de Operaciones Especiales from Spain or the RPIMa (parachute division) from France. We say, don't pick the French, your team-mates will probably run away like sissies mid fire fight.

tactics, totally oblivious to the fact that you've overheard every little skerrick of info, and have relayed it to your guys for an ambush.

THE RIGHT MOTION IN THE OCEAN (SO TO SPEAK)

What we're seriously jazzed about are the SIXAXIS capabilities. Taking cover near a low standing object, tilt the SIXAXIS and your exposed head will drop down, away from the prying eyes and scopes of snipers. Leaning against a wall and trying to get that shot off at those dudes hiding around the corner? Tilt the controller and the barrel will extend around the corner allowing you to get that tricky shot off.

We're loving what we've seen, so far, with SOCOM: Confrontation and are very much looking forward to jumping into the fray later this year. **Pave Kozicki**













PROJECT ORIGIN

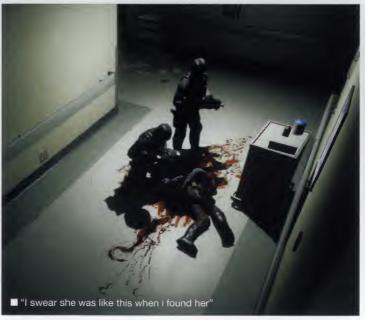
Nothing to F.E.A.R here

e were huge fans of the first F.E.A.R. It scared the crap out of us. It was creepy, atmospheric, claustrophobic and more than a little messed up. It was a LOT messed up, but that was why we fell in love with it. So when we were given a chance to scoot over to Seattle to check out Project Origin, our response was a resounding "Hell Yeah!" Then we got scared. We remembered that freaky little girl Alma from the first one. You know, the one with water logged The Ring stylings, a penchant for rivers of blood and third

degree burn pyrotechnics and we're not ashamed to admit it, we pooped our pants a little...again. But we're big boys here at *OPS*, so we soldiered on and got a bit of one on one time with Alma's progeny to see if he can still cut the mustard. Survey says...yes, he can!

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Ok. Let's get this first bit of business out of the way. Before you all start asking "if it's a sequel, why isn't it called F.E.A.R 2?" Let us just say shut your pie-hole! Jokes aside, it's as simple as Monolith changed



1

publishers, hence the name change. Bada bing, ba-da-bam, ba-da boom. Can we move on now? Thanks.

We're pleased to say that there has been a marked improvement in the look of the game. Missions are no longer constrained to dark, dank corridors or warehouses. Most of the action takes place in a war ravaged city that can't contain the supernatural upheaval going on inside it.

Alma is back, and she's pissed off. Don't ask us why, we don't know. Monolith was Johnny Tight-Lips with the info, but we reckon it may have something to do with the torture and abuse she sustained last time around. All the bells and whistles from *F.E.A.R* return with the proximity grenades, Penetrator gun (still the best name for a weapon everrn') and *The Matrix* inspired, right down to the sound, bullet time, all making a triumphant return.

600 ROUNDS IN 15 SECONDS

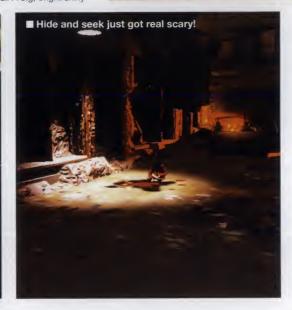
After clearing out the first section we hit a bit of road and couldn't believe our eyes. It was beautiful. A big, bright shiny

RIP YOUR FACE OFF!!



Now we mentioned these nimble freak boys that scamper about the level and look like rejects from a Marilyn Manson concert. If these little beasties get too close to you, they'll launch themselves and get right up in your grill, gnarling and thrashing, and try to scratch your face off. Luckily you're made of sterner stuff. A bit of analogue shaking and you'll wrestle them free and throw them to the ground. We highly recommend terminating their life force 0.1245 seconds after they hit the floor. Don't say we didn't warn you.







"...We know how to deal with cockroaches. We let loose 600 rounds on anything in sight. Buildings crumbled against our onslaught, asphalt was ripped up..."

mechanized exoskeleton with twin miniguns and missile launchers on the back. Was that for us? Can we use it? We can. Hot damn! Suddenly other mechs, soldiers and dudes with rocket launchers came scurrying out the woodwork like cockroaches. We know how to deal with cockroaches. We let loose 600 rounds on anything in sight. Building walls crumbled against our onslaught, asphalt was ripped out chunks at a time. At one point, after expelling several hundred rounds and a half dozen or so missiles, the screen was so covered with debris and smoke, we could barely make anything out until the dust settled. It was such an unexpected pleasure, we love getting caught off-guard

We then got a gander at a prison /experimental laboratory. The residents of this facility don't take too kindly to strangers. These little midget monkeys on acid were bouncing off the walls and clamouring on the ceiling like Jackie Chan on crack. The shirtless freaks moved

around like retarded insects, leapfrogging around the room until they turned to a more pressing matter. Us. Then they tried to take our faces...off (see RIP YOUR FACE OFF!!, funnily enough). When we weren't freaking out, we noticed how well the environment around them reacted to their actions. Jumping against a picture on the wall, cracked the glass and shifted the frame, which was a pretty sweet touch. These experiments gone wrong were tough bastards to finish off, and soaked up a helluva lotta bullets. To be honest we were more than happy to be rid of them. until....

SNAKE... SNAKE?!? RAIDEN? HEY... WHO THE HELL ARE YOU GUYS?!!?

So we survived those face sucking psychos and figured we might get a second or two to chillax and catch our breath. No dice. We caught a glimpse of what we thought was a wisp of smoke. Our eyes must have be bugging out, and we must admit, we were severely jet lagged, WAIT, there it was again! Smoke doesn't have glowing red eyes does it? *gulp* Nope! SHIIIITTT!!!! And that was about all we could muster before these Raiden wannabes started flipping and cart-wheeling, shooting and slashing at us, and then just like Keyser Soze, "poof" they were gone. These spectral mothers appear with prism like flashes and are only fully visible after you douse them with some hot lead. Each shot leaves them noticeable for a split second, so we took them down fast and waited for our heart rate to return to normal.

We really like what we've seen of *Project Origin*, so far. We've gotta admit, we seriously had our doubts, especially after the horrible port of the prequel from X360. The gameplay for *F.E.A.R* certainly was solid enough, but the shoddy graphics were grainy and really let the series down in a big way. Not so this time around. Visuals are tight, action is fast and everything feels just about right. We're ready for another go. Monolith, you guys let us know when, 'kay?

♣ Dave Kozicki







agnum P.I. is the coolest cat to ever lay a bird. It's not because he has an awesome gig as a Private Investigator or because he has a moe that could conceal a Snickers, it's because he lampoons about in a fireball Ferrari. Cue Ferrari Challenge, a road angel currently burning its way towards the PS3 to spread the Magnum P.I. love.

"But why, O' OPS, would we want to invest in a racer that exclusively features Ferraris when we could just snag *Gran Turismo 5 Prologue?*" Yes, um, good question. We're still working on that. However, it looks like *Ferrari Challenge* is out to stake its claim as the ultimate piece of Ferrari paraphernalia.

No less than 50 authentically recreated Ferraris will be available right out of the packet, but through further downloadable content the ambition is to include every Ferrari ever born out of the boot-shaped isle – sans the Grand Prix stuff. Expect to be able to race around in everything from the 1958's 250 Testa Rossa, to the recent F430.

Just as important is the driving engine. In order to nail the correct feel of Ferrari driving, GP2 driver Bruno Senna, nephew of legend Ayrton Senna, has provided plenty of input into how taking one of these red devils around a track feels. We recently managed to take the game for a brief spin and can concur that Ferrari Challenge has been designed to be just that – a challenge based on the tough realities of racing. Thank you, Mr. Senna.

In keeping with the hardnosed simulator vibe, there are also a range of driver assists you can disable when you start feeling cocky. Apart from obvious changes from wussball automatic to manual transmission, stability control, traction control and ABS are also adjustable. When all the assists have been given the flick the driving slides from reasonably tarne to downright raw. Accelerating too quickly and at the wrong angle can throw you into a rocket-powered pirouette, and having the slightest amount of disrespect for a hairpin will see you slide off the track and to the back of the class - guaranteed.

There's a lot to learn here, but when you finally ascend to the rank of Grand Ferrari Poo-bah you can jump online – or set up a LAN if you have the hardware – and take on all comers. It's been promised that up to 16 players will be able to line up on the grid for some virtual

red bumper jostling.

As stated, we're not sure how this Ferrari showbag will fare against its peers over the entire race, but with *Gran Turismo 5* still a fair way off, there's every chance it'll look to snag the lead for at least a short stretch. **James Ellis**

BOTTOM LINE

A game that stars Ferraris
Takes sim driving seriously.

Another racing game?

OPS IS...
observing approvingly



Meet Miss July

MERCEDES PARELLADA

Age: 26

Occupation: Bus driver Lives: Amsterdam

What kind of men do you like?

I love soldiers. I love men in uniform carrying big guns, it's so hot. There is something about how they are so put together which makes me want to get them all dirty.

Any hobbies?

Gold, I love gold. Gold jewellery, gold forks, gold miniature dogs, gold anything. I need a man who's loaded to fulfill my golden fantasies. There are so many gold things I want, like my underwear made of gold.

What's your favourite book?

I'm reading a book called, "Lonely Soldier." It's about a soldier who falls in love with a stripper from another country while at war. Her family won't let him see her because of the war.

What is a turn on?

Explosions. I love it. It's just pure power. I don't like blowing things up. But I love watching a man do it. It's so hot, it's like he's saying to me, "BAM, I will destroy you lady with my explosive love." It drives me crazy.

What are turn offs?

Men who don't blow stuff up.

What are your plans for the future?

I'd love to enlist in the army. People tell me I have a sweet voice and I think I'd be a great dispatch girl. And I could meet lots of manly soldiers and see nice explosions.

Full pictorial in next month's issue of B.C.





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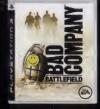




















VIDEO GAME ROCKUMENTARY?

The documentary-style clips before you start playing each new venue seems a new style of content. While games have featured interviews and behind the scenes style clips GH: Aerosmith has band members and associates reminiscing about particular events in their history. It would be awesome if this style was taken to extremes, with unlockable content for high scores and access to clips in the vault, that once earned, could be viewed in full as a documentary. That would be sweet incentive and a pretty sweet reward, too.

GUITAR HERO: AEROSMITH

Wimps and poseurs leave the hall

o we have to say it? In GH: Aerosmith you play as Aerosmith, "America's Greatest Rock 'N Roll Band" according to Activision. Your mission: to complete a rock quest that begins in the depths of a high school gymnasium. You're given four sets to master, each with five songs, three by Aerosmith and two by bands Aerosmith have played with or covered. For the mathematicians that's 20 songs, not such a long way to the top to rock 'n' roll after all... for some!

GH: Aerosmith opens with a short animated intro of Aerosmith antics, and before the new sets you get short doco-style snippets with the band about each venue. The Aerosmith songs will put you in the body of guitarists Joe Perry and Brad Whitford, or bassist Tom Hamilton, but the warm-up tunes give you the normal character select and customisation options you'd know from other GH games.

Kickin' it off on easy, we quickly switched to medium before moving on. With GH: Aerosmith it wasn't until we started playing on hard that the game gave us the rhythm and style we knew. To throw out some song names, you'll play through Aerosmith's 'Dream On', 'Love in an Elevator' and 'Sweet Emotion'. You also get to rock to the likes of Cheap Trick, Joan Jett and The Kinks. Not all the supports are household names, but the vault is intact for you to spend the money you earn from gigs - minus damage to cars, paintings and rooms of course.

Technically, not much will be different for GH: Aerosmith. Front man Steve Tyler

will lip-sync (only in the game hopefully) and much of the camera styling and stage moves we recognised. The fret board won't go into off-putting hysterics when you rock out either. Which is just as well; the lighting fingers of OPS have been known to produce fret boards in a state of near-total flux.

With GH: Aerosmith, Activision may be opening a can of worms. If it takes off we may find ourselves buried in an avalanche of Guitar Hero releases. GH: Metallica, GH: Rolling Stones, maybe even a GH: DragonForce (fingers crossed). But we probably won't see a GH: Nirvana, unless they invent a shotgun peripheral (can we say that?). But, for now, Aerosmith seems to offer a new style for the franchise. It's only a matter of time 'cos there's money to be made. - Andrew Bulmer



BOTTOM LINE

Der, It's Guitar Hero New direction Why not GH: Hendrix?

OPS is... ready to rock





e're already up to the fifth game in the so-far Japan-exclusive Bleach: Heat The Soul series, then. How about that? Even more remarkably, the first Heat The Soul game was released in Japan only three years ago. Even FIFA updates can't compete with the frequency of PSP Bleach games. With so many fans of the anime living outside of Japan, though, surely its time now to bring the latest game to players around the world? Heat The Soul 5 certainly has the pizzazz we'd expect from a fighting game with potential for global success; and that silly name would attract attention from curious newcomers...

Bleach: Heat The Soul 5 features a number of new tricks, although its core remains the same: cel-shaded Bleach characters fighting it out in 3D stages, lighting up the place with their outlandish special attacks. It's a winning and wellin Heat The Soul 5 is a tag-team fighting mode, which dramatically increases the tactical possibilities by forcing you to choose more than just the one character going into battle. Specifically, you can now select two of your favourite fighters and you can also give your tag team a name. There are new special tag-team attacks, as well, where your deadly duo can team up to perform 10-hit combos that end with finishing moves.

The formation of CPU-controlled enemy tag-teams has also been personalised by Bleach enthusiasts, who voted for the 'dream teams' they'd like to encounter in the game - even the names of these opposing teams were selected by readers of Japan's Jump and V Jump mags, so you'll end up fighting against "The Double Strawberries" at some stage.

The game's initial cast is made up of to play with later on. Each of these has

character-specific attacks, strengths and weaknesses; but the level of detail and animation put into each fighter's creation in Heat The Soul 5 is equally impressive. On the PSP's little screen, it really does look as good as any Bleach game yet seen on the Big Consoles, and the hardware has no problem coping with the insane lighting effects, which go into overdrive every time a fighter unleashes a special combo attack. The only thing that seems to be missing is a guaranteed Aussie release. - Jhonti Davis

that last burrito!'

BOTTOM LINE

Comic feel Awesome cast We're three years behind

OPS is... grabbing at swords





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FEATURE Bioshock

#OLDING YOUR BREATH FOR PARTIES PARTIE

When Bioshock came to Xbox 360 and PC the flood of worship was instantaneous. Critics called it a masterpiece. Fans salivated like the mutt from Turner & Hooch. The execs at 2K went and bought themselves islands. Everyone was happy but us! Nope, we were left to sit and turn trafficlight green with jealousy. The only thing that kept us kicking was the mantra that a game as good as Bioshock would make its way to the PlayStation 3, right? It turns out we were on the money. 2K Games Marin invited OPS to San Francisco to show us how they were going with the PS3 version.

SETTING THE SCENE

It happens in seconds. One moment you're reclined on a 1950s midnight flight sucking a cigarette, the next your plane booms into cardiac arrest and you're spiralling to oblivion. A death chorus is on every channel, the propeller blades buck against the plummet. And then there's water. You have survived. You thrash to the surface and emerge in a ring of fire; the distant tail end of the plane pushes down into the water with the slowest of stabs. You're in the middle

of nowhere, a patch of blind ocean in a world of water. But you're not alone. The dark horizon is punctured by an abstract lighthouse protruding immediately ahead. As you swim up its steps, as you enter through its open doors, you're greeted with a velvet banner: "No Gods or Kings. Only Man." The door slams shut behind you; the only way is down. Welcome to Rapture. Welcome to Bioshock.

And Bioshock is good. List everything you want in a lone-player videogame and Bioshock has it in spades. AAAA+ visual kapow catapulted upwards by the Unreal

engine? Check. Unparalleled art design that creates one of the most convincing science fiction environments in recent times? Got that. And finally, what about original gameplay that expands on the typical first-person formula? Do you have to ask?

It's this rare palette of goodness that has made *Bioshock* a star on other platforms. When we arrived at 2K Games Marin the only fear we had was that the PS3 port might be a Friday arvo rush job. Games like *F.E.A.R.* and the original *Rainbow Six Vegas*, while great,

had managed to lose that final touch of polish after jumping over from Bill's box. Would *Bioshock* suffer the same fate?

So we breathed a bucket of sighs when we saw the alpha build running on PlayStation hardware. There were no neutered colours, no jagged screen tearing, no short cuts taken. Everything was in its right place. *Bioshock* is being delivered the right way – in velvet gloves.

Jordan Thomas, the Creative Director of the PS3 build of *Bioshock*, was on hand to placate our fears. "We don't want to regard any *Bioshock* release as









but can be used to temporarily power down turrets, allowing you to get close enough to hack them and turn them against enemies. Incinerate, another plasmid, allows you to click your fingers and set your target on fire. Apart from using it to attack, a bit of lateral thinking will have you melting ice-jammed doors to help you find handy objects, and turning loose bottles of alcohol into Molotov cocktails. Impressively the game never forces you to do these things, but merely provides the ecology to do so if you're creative enough to

conjure the ideas up. That's some ballsy design.

"Our mantra was 'say yes to the player.' If the player is looking at the world and thinking 'hey I wonder if I can make chemical A and chemical B explode in a cool way?' and we don't support it then we're kind of failing them," says Thomas.

After checking out 2K Marin's progress on *Bioshock* and seeing it was on target to be just as good as ever, our final obvious question was what new stuff we'd see on the PlayStation 3?

"The revisionist approach that certain major film directors have taken of mucking with things after they've been released is something we're less sold on. We'd rather let it be what it is. So when you ask about what's new, we always think about extension, instead of messing with what's there," says Thomas.

According to Executive Producer Alyssa Finley, "we wanted to include the new plasmids that were already out there (available as post-release downloadable content), include the vita

chamber option, and take advantage of the fact the PlayStation 3 has a hard drive, has a Blu-ray disc. That's the place that we're going to capitalise on the technology, not in changing the game we originally made."

That's actually a stout argument when the original game you're talking about is as masterful as *Bioshock*. Marrying blinding visuals, obsessive design, a tell-me-more tale, and a reef of fun, it's a title that'll undoubtedly float to the top when it hits PlayStation 3 shelves towards the end of the year.



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CAN BE WORDS: DAVID KOZICKI





THAT IS ONE DAMN FINE COAT YOU'RE WEARING...

In 1992, comic legend Frank Miller gave us all what we'd been waiting for, a stark, visceral and creator owned property. Most of you wouldn't know that due to the nature of contracts, many characters created by writers and artists, like Miller's creation Elektra, are not their property but belong to the company, hence all the PG-13 bastardisation. When interviewed, at the time, about the upcoming Elektra movie Miller said I had nothing to do with it, and it barely resembles my character anyway. Sin City was different. It was the dawn of the creator own properties, and the industry has never been stronger for it. He had one credo "if its Sin City, I write it, I draw it", end of story. It's paid off. Miller's black and white noir visuals, Mickey Spillane characters, excessively violent cast members, antiheroes and over the top sexy vixens struck a chord worldwide. How easily could this be made into a cell shaded sandbox masterpiece? Imagine choosing between Marv, Dwight or Hartigan. Moving through the seedy back streets of Basin City, roughing up wise guys, beating down clergymen trying to solve Goldie's murder, dumping a car with a dead cop's body into a tar pit, or simply rescuing cute like Nancy Callahan from the clutches of a deranged psychotic pervert. Maybe have drop in, drop out co-op play and work as a dynamic duo, or even trio. You could get a bunch of risqué mini games on with the sultry girls of 'Old Town', where if the price is right, all your dreams can come true. It's sounding a little Killer 7 to us, in style if nothing else. We see it as GTA meets XIII. The story

and look is already there. Somebody get cracking on this please! The only thing close is a Wii only title we just saw screens for called *MadWorld*, and that is *Sin City* to a tee. Someone's owes Frankie boy a cheque.

FANCY A PINT?

From the land of Guinness and potatoes comes visionary, award winning and somewhat unsettling scribe Garth Ennis. He's a Holywood legend. No, that's not a typo. He comes from Holywood, Northern Ireland. You may recognise his name as one of the creators of The Darkness. Having paid his dues with a stellar run on 2000 A.D. (home of Judge Dredd for the uninitiated), Ennis moved over to the US and unleashed his musings on the rest of the world. His body of work is characterised by the strong silent type male lead, a cracking wit, biting humour, strong bonds of friendship, vulgar situations, outlandish plots and some of the most disgusting, disturbing and depraved acts and scenes known to man, or beast. After a run on Hellblazer, and several independent projects, Ennis hit stride with one of the most astounding pieces of literature, simply called Preacher.

PRAISE SCREW THE LORD

We really don't know where to start with this one. Here's the rub. An angel and a devil have sex. The devil gets pregnant and has a kid. The child, known as Genesis, represents a new ideal and is imbued with the 'Word of God' (anything it tells you to do, you are compelled to do it, no matter the cost). It breaks free of Heaven and takes refuge on Earth ▷

TAKE A WALK ON THE WILDSIDE

GARTH ENNIS IS JUST ONE OF MANY "OUT THERE" COMIC BOOK WRITERS. THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT THE MEDIUM THAT ALLOWS ABSOLUTE FREEDOM. YOU'RE NOT CONSTRAINED BY BUDGETS AND IT CAN BE SOME OF THE MOST BRILLIANT AND MESSED UP READS YOU'VE EVER HAD. HIT YOUR LOCAL COMIC SHOP AND BROWSE THE TRADE PAPERBACKS. OPS HIGHLY RECOMMENDS PREACHER, THE BOYS, THE WATCHMEN, THE LEAGUE OF EXTRAORDINARY GENTLEMEN. FRANK MILLERS' GIVE ME LIBERTY. GEOFF DARROW'S HARD BOILED (HE STORYBOARDED THE MATRIX) AND MARSHALL LAW. TAKE NOTE THOUGH, THESE HAVE ADULT CONTENT AND WE'RE NOT TALKING PORN HERE, SO KIDDIES BEWARE.









PlayStation_®Portable





FEATURE Interview



Guerrilla's Managing Director, Hermen Hulst and Senior Producer, Steven ter Heide walk us through the invasion of Helghan in Killzone 2!

OPS: Walking back into the *Killzone* universe, where are we? What's going on?

Hermen: We're in Vekta where we're taking the war back to their home planet of the Helghast, you play as Sev, he's a new character, a member of alpha squad which are a part of the special forces out of ISA. You'll see some familiar faces; Rico Velasquez from the original game is your squad commander.

OPS: You've talked about Killzone 2 being about 'Hollywood Realism',

how have you created this and

what is it?

Steven: What we're really trying to create with Killzone 2 is something we call the 'theatre of war', where a player feels that he is immersed in this massive battlefield with lots of stuff happening. You'll see captured animations, you'll see bodies being revived by other friendlies, you'll see guys being fired at and blowing up tanks.

We want to make sure there is always something happening around the player, that he feels like he is comstantly under threat on this hostile planet.

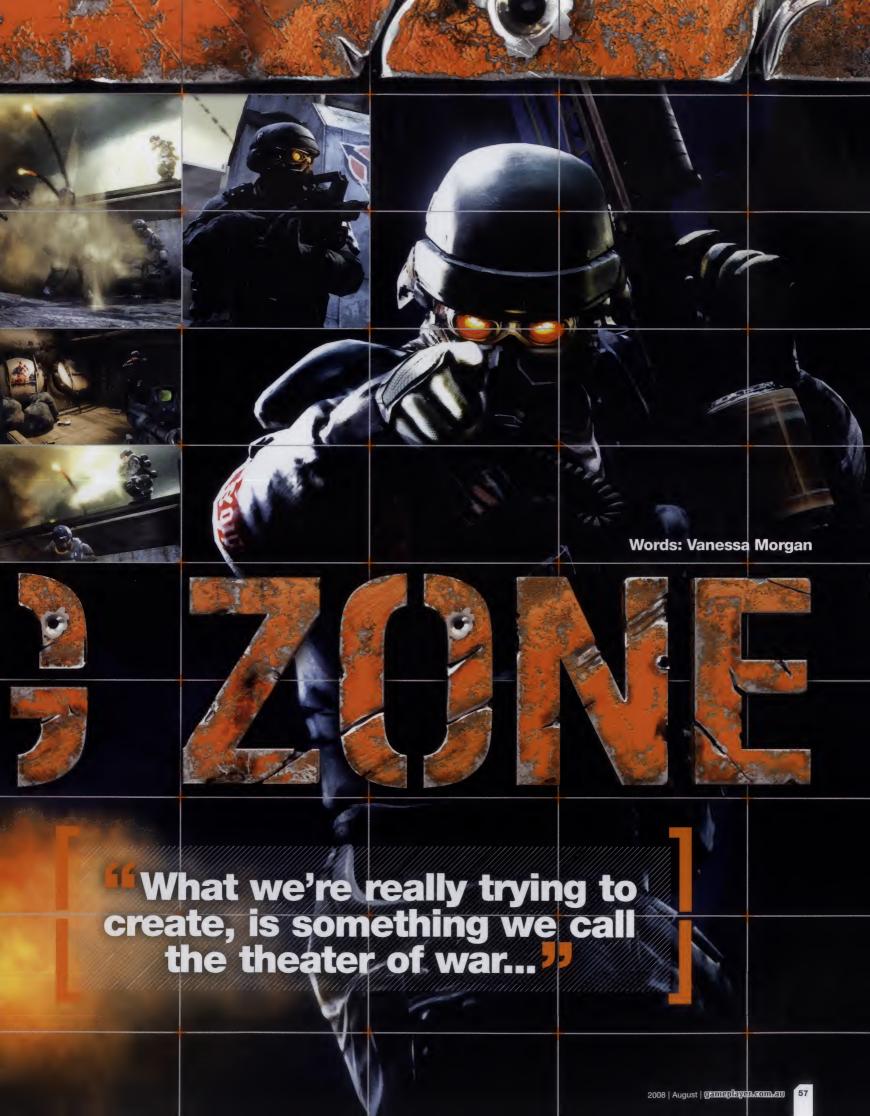
You're not welcome there and we want to make sure we take every measure to get that feeling across to the player.

We've also taken away most of the player indications from the screen to give a cinematic feel to the gameplay, Hollywood realism, and we try and stay in first person as much as possible to really create that intense experience everything is happening because you're doing it. It's not some other guy on screen, it's you.

OPS: What's the weather report on Vekta? We hear it will affect gameplay.

Hermen: Weather – well of course you're on a different planet so you have a set of different circumstances. It has more extreme effects than you're used to on earth. As you'll see there are more clouds and therefore lightning. The Helghast have electricity-based weaponry.

OPS: Being that *Kilizone 2* is a PlayStation exclusive will the ▷





...not only do the environments need to be destructible, but also the enemies themselves

The SIXAXIS is a big deal in Killzone 2. The SIXAXIS is of course something that PlayStation wants us to do. So we've taken full advantage of that but we decided we needed to come up with something intuitive. It has to help the game and put variety in there. So rather than just use it as a gimmick or that feels tacked on. We want to integrate it into the gameplay. And of course with what we've talked about with keeping it in first person, SIXAXIS allows us to do a wider range of movements not just firing a weapon. And of course, rumble is in. it's not the same without rumble.

OPS: The first game in the series received mixed reviews. What did you learn and what have you

We looked at what we did with Killzone and what was good with that game and built on our strengths and improved on the weaknesses of that title. We started by making a lot of improvements with Killzone: Liberation.

Since then we've worked on the variety, the death animations and the speech. So with Killzone 2 we're back to a First Person Shooter and we've taken things up a notch again. It's PlayStation, it's a next generation title and people expect more. We've also worked heavily on the Al.

Hermen: The objectives change dynamically throughout the levels. It's sectioned off so every stage there are objectives that will change based on how you make them or if something in the world changes.

They will change the encounters and how they play out, for instance your buddy getting injured means he can't help you out anymore and the approach will be different. So the encounters change but the story doesn't change.

OPS: What feeling do you want to leave gamers with that charge into the Helghast planet?

The single most important emotion is that the user can have is that he is just never safe. The enemies are aware and just know where they are much better than you and you're typically at a disadvantage. There are more of them and they know their way around and there is the hostility. n: I think you're right. It's that feeling of hostility. It's that you're on this alien planet and you're not wanted there. And even the planet seems to be conspiring against you, everything is against you. Also there is the sheer intensity. That's something people

picked up on the original trailer in 2005. Everything going on around you and that's something we wanted to convey

n: It's about the adrenaline rush.

OPS: What's the main objective that you're striving for as Sev, a member of Legion?

n: There is Emperor Visari, he is the aggressor in the Killzone universe. he is the leader of the Helghast and he is the root of evil as far as the ISA are concerned. So they are striking pre-eminently and aggressively to remove the threat. But when they land on Helghast they learn it's not as easy to invade the planet. The country is difficult, it's a lot more than they've encountered before on their

They're in the home territory, they have the advantage, they know their planet and they have unique weaponry based on their planet. It's definitely something that players have not encounters before in our games. Completely.

OPS: Will these features be carried into the multiplayer game?

Into the multiplayer game.

Hermen: We're not talking about multiplayer yet, the answer is yes... but we're not talking about it yet. Killzone 2 will have the same intensity and feeling in the multiplayer.

n: Destructibility is not just something that people have come to expect in games but we feel in KZ that it's a FPS, so shooting has got to be fun. So what we focused on is making sure that every bullet you fire has to do something. So not only do the environments need to be destructible and realistically destroyed but also the enemies themselves. We implemented a system called the Hit Response System, which basically means that every shot you fire hits an enemy and triggers a different response. It's a mixture of motion capture animations with the physic impulses (HAVOC) so it's dependant on range, the type of weapon or where you hit them, you get a range of reactions.

OPS: How would you say Killzone 2 compares to the all the other sci-fi FPS out there? Hermen: Killzone is Killzone. We look

at all games but there is not one single game that we are trying to beat. We look at films and books for inspiration and of course from shooter games as well. From all of that we create the experience that we want to create. It's dynamic, it's cinematic and it's not Halo or Call of Duty or any of those games.



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...all this juicy online goodness



Mirror's Edge

A must see video that finally gives you a first glimpse of this game in motion. The clean art design, sexy lead and innovative gameplay looks extremely promising at this stage.



PJM Encore

For those who saw the light and bought *PixelJunk Monsters* when we told you to, we wholeheartily say "good on ya my son!" This will be a welcome addition to one of our favourite games of the year so far.



HAZE

A playable demo for those who still want to believe that Free Radical's controversial shooter will still be a AAA title. It isn't by the way – play it and find out the horrible, horrible truth.



Race Driver: GRID

Another controversial one – some love Codemasters latest racer, but some will hate the moves made toward the mainstream. The best way to decide where you stand? Play this demo.



Everyday Shooter

You should know the score by now – this game is dog's bollocks. A bizarre cross between a standard two-stick shooter and a music album, Everyday Shooter is a must buy.



PlayStation Day

Sony has wisely created a mini-site of sorts, clustering together all the trailers from Sony's latest PlayStation day. LittleBigPlanet, Killzone 2 and Motorstorm: Pacific Rift, all the biggies are represented.

NEWS

FIRMWARE... AGAIN

Now we play the waiting game

irmware updates are most definitely a love/hate thing. We love the fact that Sony are making constant updates, but loathe the lengthy download and install times. Especially when the affect is so minimal.

The 2.35 firmware update exists purely to improve the stability of games running on the PS3, but sadly doesn't fix the problems some gamers have had with GTA IV.

So to be perfectly honest, we're not to sure why we spent 30 minutes of our life downloading and installing this update, but we're sure it helped somebody, somewhere. Possibly.





ELEPHUNK

Get Funky!

he PlayStation Network has become quite adept at throwing some weird crap straight out of left field and *Elephunk* looks set to follow in those hallowed footsteps.

Basically a game for budding engineers, Elephunk forces you to use a set amount of pieces to build a bridge that enables elephants to cross them. Confused? Wait until you play the game itself.

Because it's bloody well difficult, and while successful puzzle games are built on a solid foundation of logic that is instantly comprehensible, *Elephunk* has a sharp learning curve that will frustrate players from the outset. When you get the

basic hang of it relatively fun times await, but the question is – will you stick around that long?

Maybe not. But even if you do, you'll still find yourself frequently frustrated with *Elephunk* – basically due to the fact that the puzzles are loosely hung on the type of logic that requires multiple trial and error situations. This is a game that is constantly telling you how stupid you are.

And we don't really like being told we're stupid.









GRAND THEFT AUTO IV

Living and dying in the LC

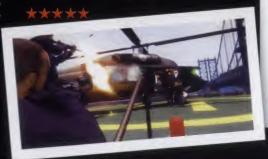
o we're sure all you little scamps have scurried along to your local games outlet and picked up a copy of *GTAIV* right? If you haven't, we're going to grab your arms and start smacking them into your face, saying "Why are you hitting yourself?" Those of you that have, surely jumped online to serve some fools up a lead sandwich. We're there with you. In fact, we've probably popped a cap in your ass and you didn't even realise it. With over a dozen game types to navigate, there's a mode for every mood. We're here to give you the inside track to the most fun, and most populated games to avoid those nasty "you vs. two other people" pitfalls.

Obviously the more people you go up against the more chaos unfolds, and though we're not discounting Deal Breaker, Hangman's N.O.O.S.E. and Bomb da Base II, we suggest you jump on with a couple of mates, as the majority of people playing them don't communicate, or worse, have no freakin' idea what the hell they're doing, or what they're meant to be doing. The best matches are definitely a toss up between Cops 'n' Crooks and Turf War and the perennial favourite Team Deathmatch. Cops 'n' Crooks allows the most freedom. You might start in a cop car, or on the run, but you can jump out at any point and tackle the getaway vehicle whatever way makes you happy. Turf

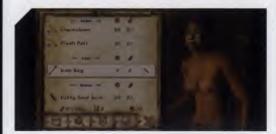
War gets messy quick, but most people get hip to taking and holding the safe-houses, and in general, watch your back, and just like in Deathmatch, we recommend strength in numbers. Car Jack City is more structured and the Mafiya Work modes lean towards mission based affairs, and don't really allow for the mayhem and carnage that the previous few do.

Now before you start, we haven't forgotten about the two racing modes. Straight race is decent enough, but *Burnout* it ain't. *GTA* Race has potential, but the majority of players tend to forget about the racing part, and just try to run each other over or blow them to kingdom come.

All in all there's a bucket-load of stuff to try out online, and the whole experience is virtually lag free. Jump in, grab a Glock and make your mark on Liberty City.



LOLGASM



Gettin' Naked

Oblivion Topless mods may be old news to some, but not to us! We rejoiced when we laid our peepers on this footage, and immediately tried to make out own. Imagine our disappointment when we discover that these boobilicious options are exclusive to the PC version. Gutted. But you can still check it out online if you must.

Watch it at: www.gamevideos.com/video/id/2706
Or Google: Topless Oblivion



GTA IV Wiiii!

In what basically amounts to a torturous taunt towards each and every gamer unfortunate enough to own a Wii instead of a PS3, some guy has gone and made up a fake *GTA IV* Wii trailer, complete with all the terrible texture work, and low res gameplay you expect from Nintendo's duck-taped Gamecubes. Wii pity the fool who can't play *GTA IV*.

Watch it at: youtube.com/watch?v=FRIOd6VEcmM Or Google: GTAIV Wii



Rent boy

Who the hell is this guy? A legitimate question. But the minute you hear him speak you'll realize this guy is the voice behind GTA's Roman – and he's very poor. It's for that very reason that Jason Zumwait has put himself up for rent – yep, that's right, for a small fee you can get this dude to come to your house and play GTA with you.

Watch it at: www.glumbert.com/media/realroman
Or Google: GTA IV Roman

100% new faster sexier easier

There's a new gameplayer in town. Come git some!
Australia's favourite games site just got a rocket up its arse!





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REVIEWS



REVIEW RATINGS

Reserved for the very worst that developers have to offer.
Essentially, anything that receives this score has no redeeming qualities whatsoever. A game receiving this score could not possibly be any worse, unless it was broken from the outset (or gave you cancer, or killed your dog). A game that should never have even survived its first pitch – as bad as it gets.

A terrible, terrible game. There may be one or two things about this game that work, or aren't actually broken, but they are so hopelessly outnumbered by the sheer quantity of badness that they basically cease to exist. Maybe it has a clever name, maybe the concept was sound – but virtually every single thing about it is bad beyond belief. Not worth the effort.

Very disappointing. A game with this score is fundamentally flawed in a number of extremely vital ways. There may be one or two things that could've been done somewhat worse than they have been, but for most part it's totally uninspired, boring and unappealing in every way. There are games that are worse, but there's not that many.

Poor. There may be parts of this game that are vaguely fun, and it may be robust enough in a few departments, but the overall package is lacking any significant reason to stick it out. Games receiving this score may show initial promise, or sound good at first, but will be unrefined, undercooked and let down by shoddy execution and poor attention to detail.

Mediocre. In the strictest terms, 50% is a pass – just. Unfortunately, a game receiving this score will have had just as many things go wrong with it as go right, and that really isn't enough to succeed. A game receiving this score will probably be entertaining in parts without excelling anywhere, yet equally sub-par in others without being outright awful.

Decent enough, although still lacking a certain something. A game receiving this score will be sound, but will have some fairly glaring faults and your interest will probably wane pretty quickly. It will have a number of imore than a few gamers, but will get just enough right to keep dedicated fans of the genre ploughing through.

Good. A robust, fun game that's well worth a look, although will only rarely amaze. A game receiving this score will have more or less accomplished nearly all it set out to do in a decent fashion, but it will have some noticeable problems that prevent it from being as good as it could be. Nevertheless, they generally won't ruin the overall garning experience.

Great. A game receiving this score comes highly recommended. A combination of some odd issues, minor problems or a lack of innovation may hamper it somewhat, but the overall impression it leaves it very positive. Very entertaining, very satisfying and you woudln't hesitate to recommend it to others. Well ahead of the pack in most departments.

Excellent.
Outstanding in almost every way.
Some negligible blemishes will just keep it from being held aloft as a true masterpiece, but it is very likely the best in its field.
Most elements of this game will be truly remarkable and you'll be hard-pressed to find too many other games of greater quality. An astonishing game that leaves all but the very best behind.

Incredible. Everything went right during the creation of this game. A game receiving a perfect 10 does not necessarily mean it is perfect, likely just teasingly close, but to reserve 10s for THE perfect game is pointless. Instead, a 10 represents a game of gobsmacking brilliance, a game that stands high above the rest and a game that you cannot afford to ignore. A masterpiece.

THE OPS AWARDS



The Gold Award

is a rare gem and only to be given to games that score that magic 10/10. This score indicates gaming of simply incredible quality! PlayStation SILVER AWARD 9/10

The Silver Award

is for games that receive 9/10. If you see this, it's a sign of star quality, indicating that you should buy this game now! PlayStation BRONZE AWARD 8/10

The Bronze Award

is for games that score 8/10. These games are highly recommended and are 100% guaranteed to satisfy.



INSIDE...



METAL GEAR SOLID 4

Solid Snakes last stand... We're ready - page 66



HAZE

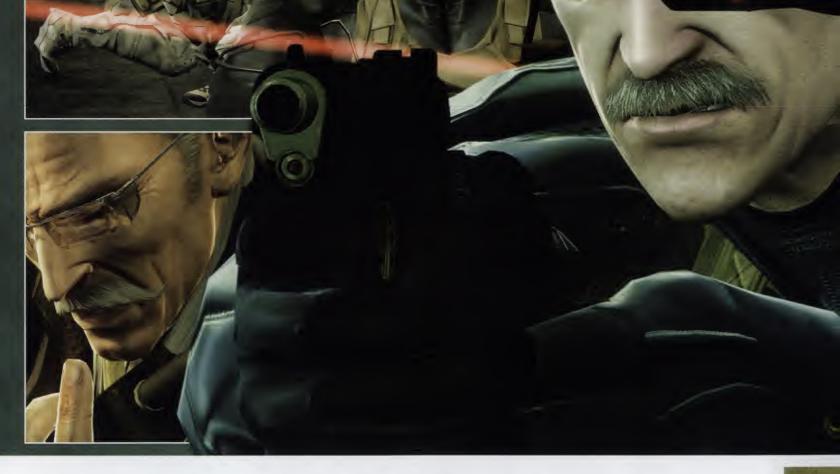
Where did it all go so very, very wrong? - page 80



FINAL FANTASY VII: CRISIS CORE

Get styling ideas for the experts in flare! - page 86

PS3 PS2 PSP REVIEW Genre: ACTION RELEASE: NOW Developer: KONAMI DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI PRICE: \$119.95 HD: 720p WEB: www.konami.jp/mgs4/en/



METAL GEAR SOLID 4

Legendary

nake old friend, it's been quite the journey. We've followed your grizzled tones for decades as you've evolved from a top down, two-dimensional rookie, to a solid, legendary hero. Along the way we've watched you deal near-death blows to a Father, a best friend, and a cloned twin brother, all the while attempting to navigate one of the most protracted, idiosyncratic plotlines of all time – and we've loved every last second of it.

We've stood behind you, Snake, through the inspired madness, the fiendish boss battles, the constantly broken 4th walls, we've suffered through all your flaws and rejoiced in your genius for one simple reason – there is absolutely nothing in our beloved medium that plays, controls, or manages to inspire debate and furore, quite like the *Metal Gear Solid* series.

You either take *Metal Gear Solid*, or leave it - there's no in-between. You'll either curse the ponderous cut-scenes and lambast the stubborn control system, or adore the labyrinth of sub plots and its insistence upon pushing the humble video game into new, at times uncomfortable, spaces.

The good news (or bad news) is that MGS4 is in no way different to its predecessors in that respect. If videogames are the new Rock 'n' Roll, then Metal Gear Solid 4 is its grumpy Bob Dylan: uncompromising, insolent... challenging, yet frequently brilliant and you'll either love it or hate it.

Just so you know. We love it - with absolute and resolute gusto.

JUST AN OLD KILLER, LOOKING FOR SOME WET WORK

In case you didn't know, Snake is now old - old at a time when it's almost in

vogue to take a last, lingering, nostalgic look back at the heroes of our childhood before finally sending them off to pasture. Rocky did it, Indiana Jones did it, and now it's Snake's turn to have one last throw at the dice, before riding off into the sunset; but let us say this: Metal Gear Solid 4 does the eternal theme of growing old in a brave new world far more justice than either of those movies ever did. This is a game that solidifies gaming's maturity; it's a moral victory for an emerging medium: this is the kind of action movie Hollywood wishes it could make.

We won't divulge too much of the









"But then a whole bunch of Gekko come crashing into your world and quite literally blow your freakin' mind"

plot, but we will give you the bare bones. Liquid Ocelot is on the move, and wants to take control of the world's military by staging a coup d'état on every single soldier on the globe. It's up to Snake to take him out, all the while struggling with his rapid aging and the possibility that he carries within him the potential to either liberate, or kill, the entire global populace.

The game starts in the middle-east, but before the gig is up you'll have been to five distinctly different locations, hunting down Liquid across the globe – then you'll promptly restart your PS3 and get set to do the same thing all over again.

COURAGE IS SOLID

Metal Gear Solid 4 is a game that bravely attempts to juggle both the old and the new simultaneously, and succeeds with ease. From the minute you start playing you'll immediately feel at home, the controls, the movements, the art design – everything is present and correct. While

MGS has added plenty of brand new moves into Snake's arsenal, there's the overall feeling of slipping back into a pair of the most comfortable shoes you've ever owned.

But then a whole bunch of Gekko come crashing into your world and quite literally blow your freakin' mind.

Because Metal Gear Solid 4 is a game that takes the fundamentals of the series – sneaking, great AI, flexibility of approach – and transforms them into something altogether more sweeping and epic. Controls have been refined to a razor sharp edge, and are far more accessible than ever before, but more importantly, the game has expanded its horizons in terms of sheer scale.

Simply put: the scope of the game has transformed immensely. Sure there'll be times when your trying to evade a couple of guards like the old days, but there will also be times when you're attempting to outsmart two entire



platoons of rival PMCs and a chopper in the midst of a brutal airstrike. What do you do? Take the side of one group and eliminate the others? Shoot down the chopper with an RPG? Ignore all those elements and try to sneak past everyone? All viable alternatives.

And that's the beauty of *Metal Gear Solid 4* within a seemingly linear narrative focus there is an almost endless scope for experimentation. We've had the honour of playing through *MGS4* twice now, and had numerous different experiences on both play throughs. At this stage we're eagerly awaiting the release of the game to have a third go – there is an almost overwhelming feeling that we still haven't exhausted the potential of this great videogame.

Because almost every single time you ask a question of the game's intricate level

design – what if I try this approach? Or sneak past the PMCs from this direction? It seems like MGS4 has you covered. It never nudges you in any set direction, not even gently, but encourages you to think rationally and make your way forward by the force of your own will. It's this feeling of immersion and freedom of choice that consistently amazes throughout the game.

IT'S GONNA BE A BUMPY RIDE!

There are some sandbox type elements to gameplay, some sections undoubtedly more than others, but rest assured when MGS4 goes linear it does so for good reasons: to make every single synapse in your brain implode.

Because when it comes to incredible vehicle chases, we thought we'd seen it all with *Uncharted*, but with all due

respect to that game, there are at least three set pieces in *Metal Gear Solid 4* that completely destroy those previous watermarks on every possible level. One scene in particular will have you rubbing your peepers in disbellef. To say it sets a new standard for audio-visual presentation would quite literally not be doing it justice. At times you'll almost find it hard to believe you are playing a videogame.

Overall, MGS4 sets a new standard for presentation and production values, not just with regards to sheer pixel pushing power, but the overall product. Whereas GTA IV, to a certain extent, sacrificed certain graphical niceties in pursuit of its grand vision, Metal Gear Solid 4 is polished to fine sheen, with a clean art design that is devoid of jaggies, maintaining an almost perfectly rigid frame

ARGH! MY BRAIN!

Metal Gear Solid tends to run amok with your expectations of gaming. Here are a few examples of that...



WHA- WHAT DISC?

You are instructed that the codec number for a character is on the back of a disc. You spend hours looking through your inventory until you realise that the number is on the back of the actual video game box. Argh my brain!



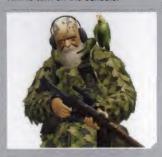
I CAN READ YOUR MIND!

Psycho Mantis predicts your every move, even telling you which games you've been playing, until you realise that he's reading the memory card. Once you switch control ports, you can kick his arse!



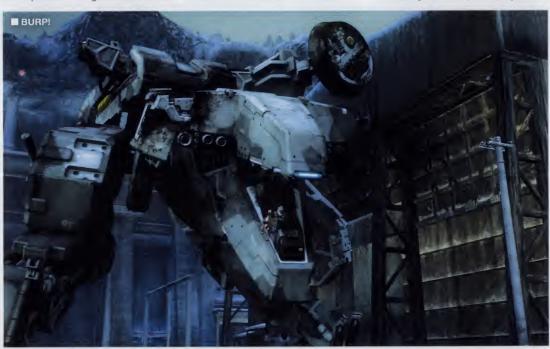
TURN OFF THE GAME!

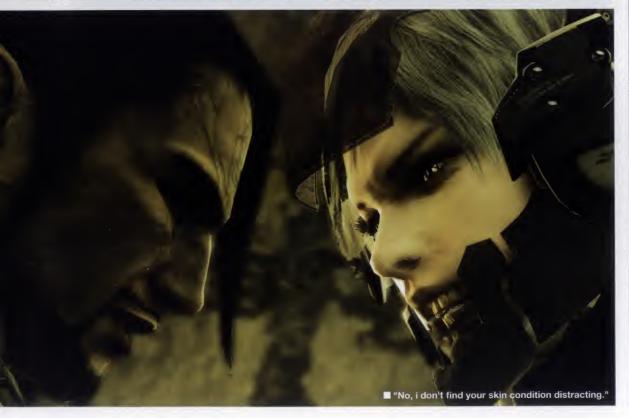
After uploading a Virus to Arsenal Gear, main character Raiden starts going stir crazy, the 'people' who have guided him throughout the mission start to babble, about this all being a game — even instructing him to turn off the console!



THIS IS... THE END

If you save during the epic boss battle with 'The End' and come back to the game roughly a week later, you'll find that you don't have to kill him anymore – He's already dead. The reason? Old age...





■ Play the game you'll figure it out... et



PERFORMANCE ART

Some among you may feel that David Hayter's voice performance has descended into parody as of late, but in MGS4 he is absolutely right on the money. As the game progresses and Snake gets weaker, you can really hear the crackle in his voice. Apparently producer Ryan Payton gave Hayter 5 different levels to work with, one being the freshest and five being the weakest, to give the actor an idea of how Snake was supposed to be feeling at the time.







rate throughout. While the odd dull texture pops up to spoil the party, it's almost offset by sheer density of the incredible character models - in particular Snake

And while it seems strange to be talking about it in a videogame, the cinematography and direction of Metal Gear Solid, even when plunged deep into one of its infamous, self indulgent cut-scenes, is nothing short of stellar. You may feel the need to skip some of the more exposition heavy segments on your second play through, but fans of the series will be enthralled when playing through for the first time.

THE PRICE IS RIGHT

Sadly however, this high level of presentation comes at a price, and that price is the frequent intrusion of loading screens. This is hardly a problem when it comes to the real meat of the game, but when it comes to set pieces that move quickly from area to area, they become a bit of a nuisance.

But in the same way that GTA's frame rate issues were almost testament to the game's heady ambition, the frequent loading times in MGS4 seem to be necessary for a game pushing the limits



of its hardware. It's undoubtedly a small sacrifice we're willing to make, and even if it does break up the tension of some of the game's high octane moments, there's a strong possibility you'll barely notice.

What you definitely won't fail to notice, however, is the lead-like density of absolutely every aspect of Metal Gear Solid 4 - and if small issues like some loading times are a result of this level of detail, then it's a cross we're willing to bear. Koiima's design ethic always seems to cater for the player who is content to explore every nook of a game's interior, and as such the game is littered with fan service - from pet chickens named after Liquid and Solid, to frequent visitors from Snake's cursed past, this is a game that manages to cater for fans, whilst making

itself accessible to first timers.

There's a lot riding on this game - for PS3 owners it's justification for money spent, and for others it's motivation to finally purchase the console in the first place. For Konami it's a huge investment and for creator Hideo Koiima it's an attempt to make gaming a serious business again. But above and beyond those underlying concerns and motivations Metal Gear Solid 4 is simply a videogame - a videogame that just so

happens to redefine what a videogame can do, or be.

And on that count Metal Gear Solid 4 stands head and shoulders above, as an example to the rest and as a rich interactive experience that almost transcends gaming itself. Hollywood can keep its Indiana Joneses, its James Bonds; we have Solid Snake, the legendary hero.

And Metal Gear Solid 4: a legendary game. - Mark Serrels

- Insane production values
- Endlessly replayable
- CONS:
- Frustrating load times
- Cut scene heavy

ERDICT Arguably the best PS3 game to date – an undisputed masterpiece...





PS3 PS2 PSP REVIE

- **GENRE:** ADVENTURE
- RELEASE: NOW
 DEVELOPER: TRAVELLER'S TALES
- DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION
- PRICE: \$89.95 HD: 720p

■ BACK STORY: After a bunch of, well lets face it, crap Crash Bandicoot games, the word LEGO has given Traveller's Tales the Midas touch, turning every brick into pure gold. They've brought our favourite characters to life in a new context. God bless TT!!



LEGO Star Wars before it, the all ages friendly films have been ever so faithfully recreated by those maestros at Traveller's Tales, yet tweaked with an abundance of outrageous humour and piss-taking of iconic situations that makes the final package literally impossible to resist! We tried to be jaded and scrutinize every

tone for the entire game with the typical tongue in cheek tone that the previous outings were renowned for. In fact, we dare you not to piss yourselves at the rendition of Indy's navigation of the jungle, grabbing of the idol, and eventually losing it to Belloq (we hate that guy), all told without a single word out loud, just

voyage. Now it's time to get amongst it and kick some brick!!

Now we know a lot of developers out there boast about destructible environments, but they ain't got nuthin' on this! Just about anything can be smashed apart and converted into the little gold and silver LEGO currency with a minimal









amount of bashing, and punctuated by a resounding almost sonic boom with each hit...thank you THX! In fact, the sound is almost a character unto itself in this. The lack of dialogue means that other aspects are tweaked, so each block you build, table you smash, or unlockable you...err...unlock crashes open with a thundering boom-shack-a-lacka! Don't believe us? Put this puppy on a seven channel speaker system and pump it up like we did, you'll be astonished at what you hear. We were.

YOUR MOVE LAO CHE...

How does it play you ask? Freaking awesomely! The characters each have specific moves, and now can use certain items for player specific accessibility. It gives a remarkable amount of replayability. Certain characters can get access to wrenches to use as levers, or to repair cars, just watch your back, as there are plenty of scavengers about. We knew we had a wrench in our kit in the Raiders section, but when we tried to access it, it was gone. We noticed a bunch of monkeys lollygagging about and a few bananas. The penny dropped. We grabbed a banana, and threw it at the monkey. Imagine our glee when the monkey eagerly grabbed the banana and dropped our wrench. It just doesn't get any better than this. You also get to different sections by owning books to decipher hieroglyphics (reading is fundamental) and a shovel can unearth hidden treasure. Differentiating from its predecessors, with the exception of Indy's whip, you don't have any main weapons apart from your fists of fury. A selection of limited ammo holding pistols and machine guns can be picked up, as well as spears and swords that can be impale your foes.

NO TICKET!

What about the storyline? C'mon now...seriously. If you don't know the storyline by now we'll throw you in a pit of snakes, rip out your heart in India, or let you be decapitated by a Knight of the Round Table, get it? The story is just as you remember it, barring a few comedic tweaks here and there. Your playable characters are every main star of the films, and each moves with grace and is immediately noticeable for who they're meant to represent. Indy moves swiftly and throws himself across chasms, up ropes and shimming across ledges, Wilhemina and other females have a slower, softer movement, and Shorty runs around like a kid on a sugar rush.

We were incredibly impressed with LEGO Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures. Well crafted, all faithfully imbued with the spirit of the movies, and an ageless sense of whimsy. The most fun you'll have all year, bar none, no matter how old you are. & Dave Kozicki

CHEEKY MONKEY

We know we mentioned the different weapons and items you can pick up, but here's something you may not have noticed before. You may have been sure you had a wrench or shovel, only to try and pull it out and discover, at the most inopportune moment, that it ain't there. WTF? Look around and see if there are any monkeys. One of them cheeky buggers has ransacked your backpack, and made off with your goodies.





- Fun for the whole family
- Awesome sense of humour

CONS:

- No Kingdom of Crystal Skull
- No LEGO pieces with pack

VERDICT Joy and adolescent wonder overcame us with this fittingly and faithfully recreation.

PS3 PS2 PSP REVIEW

- RELEASE: NOW DEVELOPER: HIGH MOON STUDIOS
- DISTRIBUTOR: VIVENDI

- HD: 720p
- WEB: www.bournethegame.com

■ BACK STORY: The Bourne Conspiracy isn't based on a spe movie - instead it "re-imagines" parts of The Bourne Identity and then goes on to tell its own story – nor does it feature Matt Damon in the lead role. Never easy being a licensed game, is it?







Matt who?

ccording to reliable sources on the Internet, Matt Damon declined to be involved in this project because he's not a huge fan of videogames, especially of the violent shooter variety. Rather, the 37 year-old actor betrayed his surprising age by claiming he would have preferred the game to be more like Myst, the venerable point-and-click adventure game. Damon further suggested the inclusion of puzzles for the player to solve that explore Bourne's amnesia and play with his memory, seemingly suffering from slight memory loss himself as he forgets that he spends much of his screen time in the films brawling with various assailants.

Needless to say, developer High Moon Studios (whose previous game was Darkwatch, the PS2 first-person shooter involving demonic bloodshed and gruesome dismemberment) has paid scant attention to Damon's advice and opted to draw inspiration from a far more familiar range of sources. As a result, Damon allegedly refused to allow his likeness to be used in the game, and so we're left with The Bourne Conspiracy: a third-person action thriller starring some dude who looks nothing like Matt Damon.

The Jason Bourne as reinvented here is reminiscent of Uncharted's Nathan Drake, if only he cared a little more about his personal grooming and kept his shirt tucked in. He's also a brutal bastard, despite his decidedly metrosexual appearance. Equally at home in a tight

immaculately distressed hair as he is slamming a thug's face through an air-conditioning unit, this version of Bourne has more in common with Damon's own

game, and it slips easily from third-person shooting to side-view hand-to-hand combat, offering both forms of violence in equal measure. When wielding a firearm, Bourne charts a fairly conventional route. You can take cover behind walls and most conveniently square obstacles such as crates and trashcans. Keeping you on your toes is the partially destructible





"a combat system that rises above its simple mechanics through sheer balls-out bravado"

environment that sees wooden boxes splinter and collapse under sustained fire as you huddle behind them - key to success here is parking yourself astern of the less common bulletproof metal container.

Enemies tend to arrive in small groups and plant themselves behind an assortment of barricades, popping out of cover now and again to fire off a few shots. They're not particularly smart though, rarely altering their tactics when taking damage and completely failing to outflank your position when

a many-on-one

scenario would

suggest they could effectively do so. Couple this with a sluggish aiming reticule rather than a targeting lock-on system, and the ranged combat just about manages to put the "fun" in functional. It's absolutely competent, yet never gets the pulse racing as you'd hope.

Far more entertaining is the melee combat. During such fisticuffs, Bourne and his sparring partner(s) seem to have a gentlemen's agreement not to use their firearms. Instead, Bourne is given two attacks - one fast, one heavy - and a block, with the emphasis squarely placed on building combos via the two types of attack. Light taps deliver quick or powerful punches, while holding either prepares a similarly weighted kick to an opponent; stringing these correctly together into a flurry of blows quickly turns the tide in your favour. In fact, it's often a better idea to forgo the use of guns and simply engage enemies at close range.

Successful hits increase Bourne's adrenaline which in turn opens up the use of "takedown" moves. When activated, a takedown sees Bourne improvise a much more powerful attack, often taking advantage of items and objects in close proximity. This is precisely where you'll see him grab a fountain pen off a nearby table to stab his opponent, or back slam his foe into a handy electrical box.

It's all very visceral and kinetic, with the camera swinging round to a tight side-view of the action allowing you to feel as close as possible to each bone-crunching collision of fist to face. Takedowns further highlight the grisly animation, quickly cutting to an even more cinematic angle to showcase the impact of another ingenious ad-lib assault. The end result is a combat system that rises above its simple mechanics through sheer balls-out bravado.

In full flow, the Bourne Conspiracy can feel like it's flying, as you rocket from encounter to encounter, interspersed with hectic chase sequences both on foot and in vehicle. (Sure, the driving sections are as underdone as the gunplay, but they do present a mild, if short-lived, distraction.) Linear environments assist the breakneck pace - it's easy to keep the momentum going when it's always obvious where you need to go next. Which make the inevitable and thankfully rare moments of confusion all the more jarring. In a game of this nature, you shouldn't be pausing to ask "Which door do I need to go through?" or "Why can't I climb over this knee-high fence?"

The Bourne Conspiracy's identity is that of a solid, playable game. It's a decent rental title, a superficial vet stylish action game that ticks all the right boxes for its target audience. Dedicated gamers won't find enough meat on the bones to

truly satisfy, however it delivers the kind of ready-made thrills that the more casually inclined tend to lap up with greed.

Ultimately, Matt Damon may have had the better ideas about what could constitute a genuinely interesting or thoughtful game, but High Moon's high octane version is definitely the more faithful take on the source material present in the films. & David Wildgoose

A KILLER INSTINCT?

Jason Bourne is a smart guy. Unlike James Bond or Splinter Cell's Sam Fisher though, he doesn't rely on high-tech gadgets so much as his wits. Players can switch on the "Bourne Instinct" to heighten their perception - or more prosaically, to highlight useful objects, enemies and even hidden collectables. While sound in theory, the Instinct is a bit gimmicky; it doesn't really give you any real advantage and, as you pause to examine your surroundings, tends to break the rhythm of the action.



PROS:

CONS:

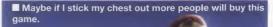
- Brutal hand-to-hand combat Nonstop action
- Little depth or replay value

Weak gunplay

VERDICT: Neither stillborn nor reborn, a reliably movie to-game adaptation that fans will enjoy.

PS3 PS2 PSP

- RELEASE: NOW
 DEVELOPER: SECRET LEVEL
 DISTRIBUTOR: SEGA
- - HD: 720p
 - WEB: ironmanthegame.marvel.com









IRON MAN

Awesome movie...shite game.

he notion that movie-tovideogames are rubbish is beyond cliché and now an absolute truth. is Iron Man one of these?

First and foremost, the Iron Man character model has been nicely rendered, and is voiced by Robert Downey Jr. - the guy who played Stark/ Iron Man in the flick.

If you're a fan of the comic series, alternate versions of the suit can be unlocked and used in-level. It also features a bunch of villains and scenarios which weren't used in the movie.

Secret Level has done a decent enough job of making you feel like a polished chrome superhero and not some

generic patsy. There's genuine joy to be had taking off and zooming around like a Superman wannabe. You can even upgrade your suit as you go, offering better thrusters, melee attacks, health and weapons energy.

So the basics are covered, and that's about the sum total of what this game gets right. The biggest problem is that it

just isn't very much fun to play, at all. Not much thought has gone into level design, you just face more powerful bad guys in droll locations, before that level's final boss. With a fairly basic combat engine, this gets boring, fast.

Filled with bugs, it's absolutely clear it was rushed out the door to meet the release of the movie. - March Stepnik

PROS:

- Looks like Iron Man
- You don't have to play it

Level design, combat, and controls are all substandard

VERDICT Sometimes a game tickles us in ways only our partners can. This is not such a game.





- GENRE: TURN BASED STRATEGY
 RELEASE: NOW
- DEVELOPER: FIRAXIS DISTRIBUTOR: 2K GAMES
- PLAYERS: 1-8 PRICE: \$99.95
- HD: 720p

SID MEIER'S CIVILIZATION REVOLUTION

Viva la revolution!!

ver wanted to have the whole world in your hands? Have the fate of an entire nation resting on your every whim and fancy? Well here's your chance to live out those fantasies as Sid Meier's Civilization Revolution makes its way to home consoles.

Long established on PC, this is the first foray into next-gen territory and we have to say, we like what we see. Taking on the persona of one of history's greatest leaders, it is your duty to lead your civilization to victory against those around you. Do you play the aggressor and win through military might? Do you seek education and enlightenment? Does cash rule everything around you? Or will you take to the heavens and explore the vastness of space? All these options are available, and will lead you to victory. Conqueror, scientist, humanitarian or philanthropist, pick a hat, or sample

them all, that's the joy of Civilization Revolution, you're not pigeon holed to any particular style. which should lead to endless replay-ability.

What we're really excited about is the online multi-player. Go head to head with a mate, grab three buddies and team up or just go hell for leather in a free-for-all. The campaign is streamlined to allow for some frantic turn based action on your path to world domination.

With a dizzying array of options and bolstered by a strong multi-player aspect, Civilization Revolution should be a proud addition to help round out any collection. Don't be afraid...welcome to the revolution. & Dave Kozicki

■ Don't

my other hand is

- Thought provoking
- Slick multi-player
- Cartoonish look Less frantic than on PC

VERDICT: Not everyone's cup of tea, but great fun and shockingly addictive.

OFFICIAL SCORE:

PlayStation





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GICIN WUN

PS3 PS2 PSP REVIEW

- RELEASE: NOW
 DEVELOPER: FREE RADICAL DESIGN
 DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT
- PLAYERS: 1-4 (1-16 ONLINE)
- PRICE: \$109.95
- HD: 720p

■ BACK STORY: Free Radical Design is a favourite around these parts. Apart from the fantastic *TimeSplitters* games, they also crafted the respected *Second Sight*. This solid portfolio is why *Haze*'s crudeness has us baffled.



HAZE

We don't feel hazy after playing through this, more like gutted.

e had high hopes for this one. A Ubisoft gun bandit that featured a Private Military Corporation (PMC) powered by more drugs than Woodstock sounded better than a meat pie at a football match. The added boon of four-player jump-in jump-out cooperative Campaign, didn't hurt the fuzzy feelings we were holding for Haze either. That's until we played it.

For a hyped first-person shooter, Haze is second-rate fodder from Genericville. It's not flat-out broken but lacks any of the flavour pioneers from the genre have scratched out since Doom started painting kid's minds with demonic gore. Sure you score a gun and get to pulp folk, but Haze flat out ignores the other

stalwarts of design which have been around since dogs and cats were taught to piss outside. Boggling weaponry, deft choke points, fox-like opponents, and an inspiring world to traverse are now merely the norm for the genre. Haze, however, has seemingly left these soldiers of quality behind. We're not sure if it feels more like a rushed title, or a shooter from 10-years ago.

If anything the presence of the story makes matters worse. Your lead chunk of man, Shane Carpenter, has just been promoted to Sergeant in Mantel's PMC along with some other gimp by the name of Duvall, who happens to have a mouth like the floor of a taxi cab. Based on Mantel's monstrous mobile Land Carrier,

you're out to take down the Promise Hand, a terrorist faction led by the nefarious Skin Coat. At least, that's what you're told. After an introductory yarn you find yourself hacking through the first few chapters of the game in the name of Mantel. You butcher rebels. You slap your yellow and black buddies on the arse. You go a little "Saturday night" consuming copious amounts of nectar. Then comes the "twist".

RAIDEN WASN'T A BRIGHT IDEA, EITHER

Normally we don't "do" spoilers, but Haze is hardly an M. Night Shyamalan masterpiece. Here goes: in Haze you're only a member of Mantel's bullet jockeys





for four chapters. After that you change teams to fight with the tree hugging rebels, ditch the nectar (read: interesting element of the game), and play out the rest of the game as a standard Joe Average – a pistol monkey fighting for the misrepresented Promise Hand. Note: the last few points can also be found in the dictionary under "Un-awesome".

Not that changing sides forces you to forsake much anyway. The nectar abilities are hardly new. Administering it into your blood supply, foes turn bright white on the screen, so you can spot them a mile off, and you score an increase in speed and toughness. We've seen similar power-ups like this about a zillion times before, mind you. As far as the overdose "experience" goes, it only happens during one level. The screen goes crazy and every

character - friend or foe - turns into a dark shadow you fire on automatically. Again, it's hardly brilliant, but at least it's something.

FATALITY CHOREOGRAPHY

Compare it with your time as a rebel where your special power is... dying. Well, sort of. If you're copping too many bullets in the chest you get the opportunity to feign death. Mantel soldiers, as the story goes, can't see the results of their carnage, so you're nigh on invisible until you decide to stand up and slice the bumblebee bastards from behind. Thing is, it's not something you'll feel compelled to repeatedly do. Who wants to dillydally about on the ground when you can just shoot the mongrel ahead of you in the head and move on?

"You're never forced to think during combat and can carve through the majority of the game with nothing but an automatic rifle and headhungry aim."

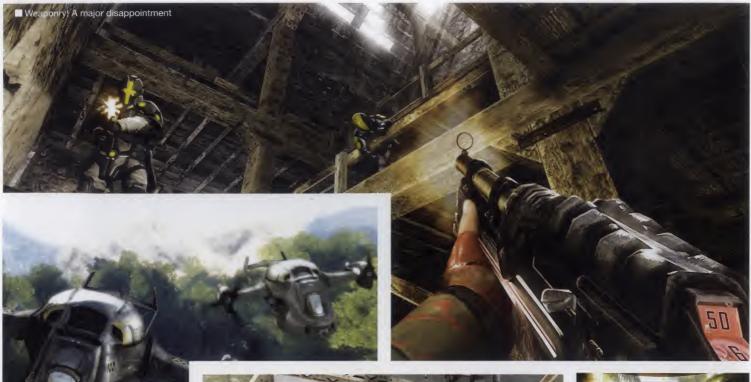
There are a bunch of other abilities you also score for joining the dirty rebels including the ability to dodge and roll, plant trip mines, convert any procured ammunition to fit the weapon you're carrying, and make nectar gas grenades. By the far the best ability you have in the game is the latter. Throwing a nectar grenade into a bunch of Mantel soldiers causes their nectar dose to balloon out of control and they'll start pitching lead at each other – always fun to watch.

WHERE'S THE GOVERNATOR WHEN YOU NEED HIM?

It's not nearly enough, though. The problem with the whole "rebel vs Mantel" thing is that as a rebel you never grease your pants over a confrontation with Mantel troops. Like the Predator or the

Terminator, the Mantel boys needed to seem like an impossible force. Instead Mantel's super troops are lemmings, brainless bozos with guns that'll run into a swarm of gunfire like it's a Hooters restaurant. Incredulously, *Haze* even goes so far to try and blame the absence of Mantel A.I. on the effects of the mindaltering nectar.

As a high-tech military army, we would've liked to see them take a page out of *Ghost Recon* and co-ordinate their attacks with surgical precision. The only thing these grunts know how to do is take cover. And that's only some of the time. And often with their heads poking up ready for a capping. You're never forced to think during combat and can carve through the majority of the game with nothing but an automatic rifle and head-



hungry aim.

Just kill me

Speaking of which, weaponry is a major disappointment. Any science fiction first-person shooter has a duty of care to ensure their weapons kick ass. What do we get in *Haze?* We get a couple of shotgun and automatic rifle varieties, grenades, a pistol, throwing knives, two sniper rifles, a rocket launcher and a flame thrower. Note how none of these weapons require any explanation whatsoever. It's a sci-fi game! Where are the spider mines, the pistol that can shoot through walls, the... ah, what's the use?

JUST STICK IT THERE, WOULD YOU!

By far the biggest sin that'll banish Haze to the confessional box and that magnifies its other shortcomings is its overall design. Or lack thereof. It feels as though it was conceived in an afternoon over some boxed goon. Perhaps that's not a fair thing to say to the developers who put a lot of sweat and blood into pushing Haze out the door, but the schematic they were working to lacked chutzpah. The point of first-person games is to put you in the moment, to make you buy your surroundings, your situation. Haze's levels feel like goofy bits of geometry stuck together without thought for mood or interesting combat. A case in point is the last mission for Mantel that takes place in the Copper factory. An ugly, bland, connection of shapes and formless areas, it sees you scoot about killing randomly placed rebels while hitting switches to open the way ahead. There's

no detail in the environments, no sense in the situation, and no room whatsoever for intuition. It's move ahead, kill, move ahead, kill, ad naseum.

There are vehicles, but their inclusion hardly merits a medal of honour. An obvious sign of Haze's desire to be the Halo of the PlayStation 3, you get to fang about in jeeps and four-wheeled bikes while back-up compatriots ride shotgun. It's a nice change, but the levels are over quickly and again require little effort to get through. What's more, the vehicles aren't particularly fun to pilot. Even when zooming along an open beach, we were never tempted to indulge in a few wild sand doughnuts. And that's not normal.

FOUR-MAN REDEMPTION

It's ironic that *Haze*'s standout feature, it's four-player co-operative campaign, is likely the cause of a lot of these woes. In addition to playing through the campaign online, players passing by your killing couch can simply jack themselves in and out of a game for some split-screen love at any time. There are no menus to revisit, no quitting out to a menu screen. It's a neat trick, but it's also possible that by placing 4-player co-op on the top wof their must-have list of features, Free Radical inadvertently boxed themselves into designing levels whose demands on function cut the gonads off form. If

so, that was a tough sacrifice. While four-player co-op is a welcome sight to behold, the resultant lack of quality may see keen players unable to garner up a full squad of recruits.

This sacrifice might also explain the patchy visuals. There are a bunch of external beachfront areas that recall some of the beauty of FarCry, and the swamp level – despite being short and devoid of action – looks suitably Disney-esque. Unfortunately, much of the game appears as though it has been dropped at birth thanks to dirty textures and no-frills architecture. If you're out to impress your mates with a game, this ain't it.

It's difficult to be positive about Haze. The trippy premise and co-op focus grabbed our attention and got us riled, but the overall execution is well behind for a mature genre populated with the likes of Call of Duty 4, The Orange Box, Rainbow Six: Vegas 2 and even Resistance: Fall of Man. They don't so much smack Haze up, as fail to acknowledge it altogether. You'd best do the same. **B James Ellis**



FORGET FREE LOVE, HOW ABOUT FREE DEATH

In addition to the co-op campaign, the game also ships with online and split-screen Deathmatch and Team Deathmatch modes - great for when you want to kill your mates instead of work with them. Up to 15 bots are also supported if you're a Nigel No-Friends or lack a net connection. While these modes still suffer from the problems that plague the campaign, ie cruddy level design and poor weapons. you can definitely have a bit of fun here with a clan of mates around. At least for a few minutes before you whack Call of Duty 4 back on.



PROS:

Four-player co-op is a first

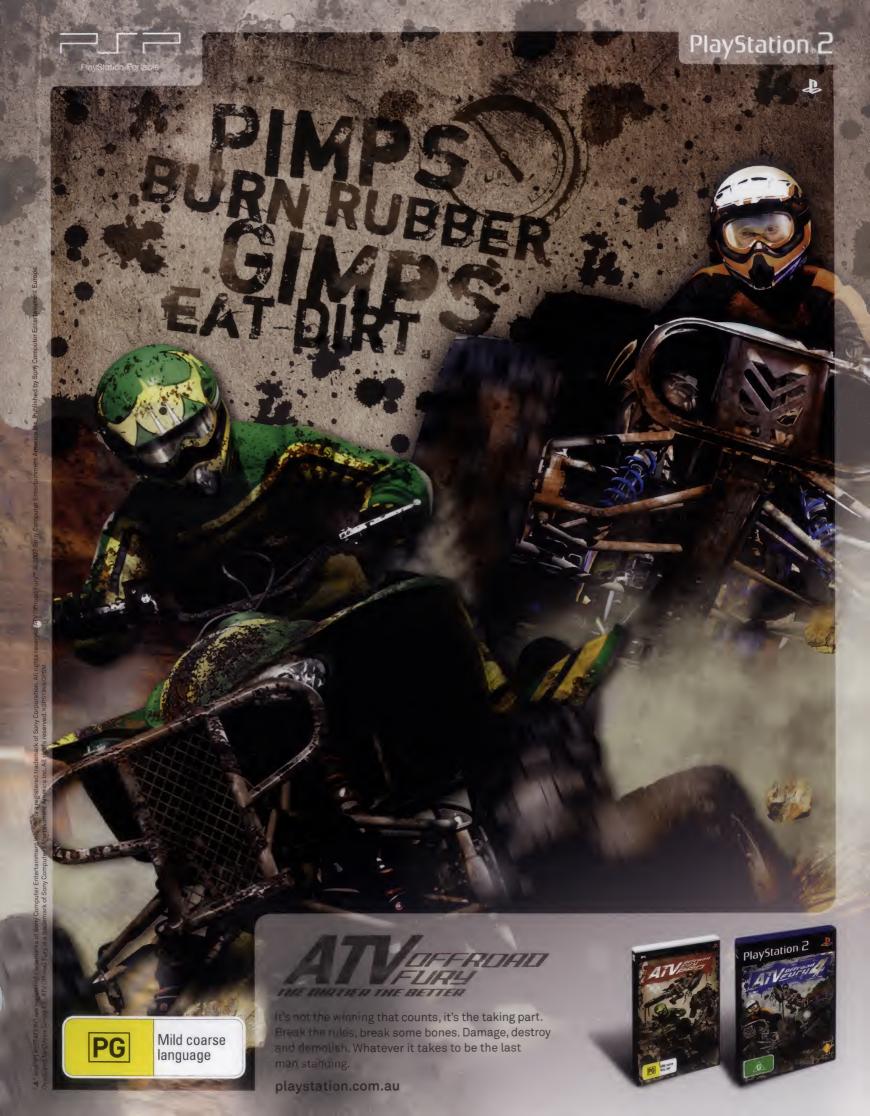
Shooting stuff is still fun.

CONS:

Apostate level design and dismal A.I.

VERDICT A flop of epic proportions, Haze hasn't learnt anything from the titans of the genre





PS3 PS2 PSP REVIEW

- **GENRE:** TENNIS SIM
- B DEVELOPER: PAM

- PRICE: \$99.95 HD: 1080p
- WEB: www.topspin3the game.com

the ultimate tennis sim in their 'almost-but-never-quite-there' franchise. Top Spin 3 offers a fine line between accessibility and hardcore depth - will everyone be able to walk it?

TOP SPIN 3

Follow the bouncing balls...

s's a hard sell when you're on your third update of a series that hasn't *quite* managed to be the best it could be so far. Top Spin was always a great series, but beneath its accessible exterior lays a game that seemed to never fully equal the sum of its parts (or at least the equation's answer somehow always fell up short). You could see developer PAM had the right idea, but for whatever reason they never managed to elevate the series to the plateau of benchmark sports (or tennis) sim they obviously so desperately wanted it to be. It was important then, Top Spin 3 have all the right ingredients, perfectly balanced and placed, to ensure it become the forerunner for the genre, but in doing so

(which they have to a large degree) PAM have also crafted a less accessible game through its steeper learning curve.

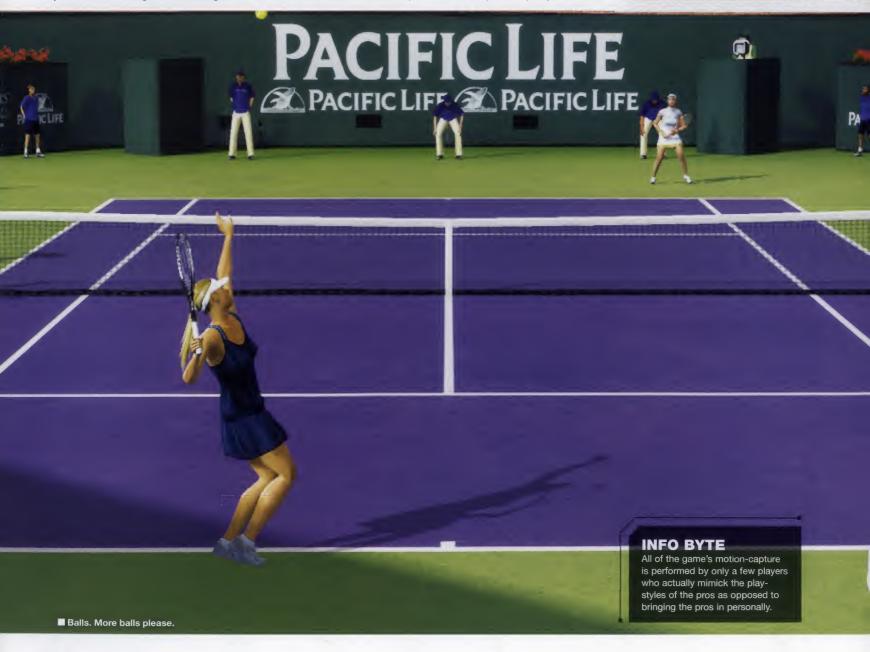
This presents an even bigger challenge as the feature-set for Top Spin 3 is far more robust, serving up a plethora of different gameplay options and modes over previous iterations in the series, but to be able to enjoy them to full capacity you're going to need to learn to play tennis videogames, all over again.

For the hardcore out there, this won't likely be a problem. For the pick-upand-players, however - the cats who like to smash it around in Virtua Tennis or Everybody's Tennis - it's going to be a bit of an uphill battle. Thankfully one of the cool new features on offer is Top

Spin School, an all-new tutorial mode that teaches you the fundamentals of playing the game, which for all intents and purposes are actually derived from the real thing.

This is both the beauty and the beast of the game. On the one hand you have a system that rewards players who understand tennis fundamentals: positioning, placement, power, shot and momentum. Being versed or knowledgeable in these will immediately give you the edge. On the other hand, having no idea how each one of these correlates to the other can mean the difference between confidently driving the ball to the base-line or watching it consistently bounce past you time and











"There is also an amazingly deep (for this style of game) character creation system that allows for building the most athletic-looking tennis star you can, or the ultimate trash whore."

again, swearing black and blue you hit the button correctly before throwing down the controller in a fit of frustration and rage.

Top Spin School then shows you the tennis ropes, step by step. You'll learn not only how to play Top Spin 3, but why stats in this sort of game are important, why certain shots are better than others based on your positioning behind the ball (or momentum toward the ball), and why playing to the other player's weak areas (based on their movements or positions

on the court) are far more important than just keeping the ball in play.

Beyond having to "unlearn what you have learned", Top Spin 3 also dishes out some of the best looking tennis visuals we've seen to-date. Players will now progressively sweat as matches draw out, and how much they do will also be reflected by the game's dynamic weather system. Player models all look very realistic while the various courts and stadiums throughout are remodelled down



to the last rivet and nail. You can match it up in a variety of locales, some based on real-life places (such as Rod Laver Arena, Melbourne) as well as a number of makebelieve courts and stadiums.

There is also an amazingly deep (for this style of game) character creation system that allows for building the most athletic-looking tennis star you can, or the ultimate trash whore. You can add all kinds of make-up, crazy hair, hats and the like. Hell, you can even add tattoos! Sweetll

Typically with this style of game, you have a deep Career Mode where you can drive your player to the top, building stats and becoming the number one player, or you can choose a real-life player to quick play from a manifest of great names, both classic and modern. The stars are made up of Andy Roddick, Mario Ancic, James Blake, Roger Federer, Tommy Haas, Justine Henin, Svetlana Kuznetsova, Amelie Mauresmo, Gael Monfils, Andy Murray, David Nalbandian, Mark Philippoussis, Maria Sharapova, Nicole Vaidisova, Caroline Wozniacki and Tomas Berdych as well as classic players Bjorn Borg, Monica Seles and the awesomely legendary Boris Becker. The PS3 is also home, exclusively, to Raphael Nadal.

With all that said, Top Spin 3 still has a lot to prove. Only time will tell if the incredibly deep and realistic new playstyle will work for everyone and indeed, if everyone will be happy to re-learn how to play these types of games. It's true the tennis genre has needed some new blood for a long while, but the learning curve

here can be very deep and daunting. Still, if you like tennis this is an incredibly competent game that has redefined the genre and the stout online mode (see box out for more) should keep satisfied customers happy for a very long time.

♣ Nick Burns

TOURNAMENT MODE

The new online stuff is the first of its kind in this field and offers players more reason to play as a community. No longer will you be scared away by a single player who consistently sits atop his online gaming throne, unreachable. Now, two week tournaments allow players to play in properly ranked matches against other players of equal skill. This means you won't be a low-level player going up against a high-ranked player as you progress. There is still a single overall leaderboard skilled players can rule over, but at least you don't have to face off against show-off pros that can't be budged.



Realistic style of play

Online is easy & accessible

CONS:

- Steep learning curve
- Visuals still not up to scratch

VERDICT Casual gamers may have problems, but verterans will be more than up to the task.

PS3 PS2 PSP REVIEW

- GENRE: RACING RELEASE: NOW DEVELOPER: CLAP HANZ
- DEVELOPER: CLAP HAN.
 DISTRIBUTOR: RED ANT
- PRICE: \$79.95
- WEB: www.sbk07.com

■ BACK STORY: If it's got two wheels or more, Italian, and cane's it around corners, it's a pretty safe bet that Milestone have had a stab at it. Their racing portfolio includes the last few SBK titles, Moto GPs, Alfa Romeos, Lamborghinis and a Corvette!

KEEPING IT REAL

One of the best selling points

grounded it is in reality. Even the

It's a refreshing change from the

more literal arcade styling that

permeates the industry. We also

dig the impressive roster of riders and tracks that has always been

the series' bread and butter...and

the hot chicks. We loves hot

chicks

arcade mode is still kinda sim like.



otorbike racing games and simulations certainly do get the short end of the stick. Often overlooked, with most eyeing their four wheeled counterparts, the majority of these are well-crafted and enjoyable simulations of the real deal. In fact, the only thing that's missing is the scraped shins and elbows, shattered pelvises and bikes tumbling end over end in a spray of dirt and body parts. The SBK series has been a staple of two-wheeled racing, and has been slowly edging out the competition for a while now. It's kind of the quiet achiever; firmly holding it's position, likely to take the chequered flag when you least expect it. So where does SBK08 fit into all of this? Is it going to produce a fitting swansong for it's loyal PS2 fan-base, or does it take the corner too tightly and skid off into the barricade?

WELL? ANSWER THE QUESTION BIG GUY....

OK, easy there tiger. It's actually a little bit of both. SBK08 is a mixed bag. The graphics are decent enough for the PS2, though not earth shattering, so there's no problems there. The bike handling is a great mix of pure simulation, if that floats your boat, or you can lean towards the arcade styled gameplay, without deteriorating into the realms of an over the top Burnout with no semblance of realism. So why the mixed

reactions you ask? Well, it's cause we've seen it all before. The series is starting to resemble another classic that seems to be re-released each year with a smattering of upgrades, a dab of paint, and trotted out with little fanfare. SBK08 has become the Dynasty Warriors of bike sims. That said, it is still a marked improvement on its Moto GP and Tourist Trophy competition. There are some very nice touches that should be mentioned. The cornering, in general, is a combination a pure skill and luck finding that perfect line. A great sense of relief washes over each successfully navigated turn, as you can just feel you're millimetres away from a

wipe-out. The customisation, as always, is impressive, and the new assistant they've included, really helps newbies accustom themselves to the intricacies of fine-tuning.

Now just to be clear, as we don't want any misunderstandings here, this is a more than serviceable game that is fun and gets the job done quite nicely, but in this era of gaming, you need to recreate and innovate, and not just stem the tide and add another number to the franchise. If you've never played one, it's well worth a look, but veterans might wait to see what the next incarnation holds... You can wait six months, can't you? & Dave Kozicki

Graphics, not the strong point! PROS: Customising options Easy to play

CONS:

- Old dog...
- Unforgiving

VERDICT: A welcome addition to the family, though this gem is starting to lose its lustre.





Something's happening to Dan... It's confusing, it's awkward, it's family!

Steve Carell stars as Dan, a widower who falls for a woman he meets in a bookstore only to find out that she is his brother's new girlfriend, in this witty and off beat romantic comedy.

To celebrate the release of *Dan in Real Life*, which is available to rent or buy from June 25, BLOCKBUSTER®, Icon Film and Pioneer are giving you the chance to win a 42" Pioneer High Definition Kuro Plasma





For entry details pick up a copy of InterAction from your local BLOCKBUSTER® store.



PS3 PS2 PSP REVIEW

- RELEASE: JUNE 20 DEVELOPER: SQUARE ENIX
- DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT
- PRICE: \$69.95 GAMESHARE: NO

■ BACK STORY: Biggest hair, over acting and unique costume design all combine to make the *Final Fantasy* series one of the most entertaining journeys around. We don't want to throw the



FINAL FANTASY VII: CRISIS CORE

Hairdressers beware!

even years before the story of Final Fantasy VII begins, to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the original release comes a game that most of the world played last year but is one of the best RPGs to be released in years.

While the Final Fantasy VII offshoots have lavished some pretty brutal treatment on the name of a game that is often voted the best RPG of all time (Dirge of Cerberus? Final Fantasy VII: Snowboarding?), Crisis Core plays that familiar Final Fantasy victory tune loud and proud.

This prequel takes us into a world where the Shrina's dominance is beginning to take hold of both the energy and military.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Zack, the name doesn't quite scream Japanese RPG hero and nor does it rate against great warrior names from the series such as Auron, Squall Leonhart and Vincent Valentine. But don't be fooled. In a blink and you'll miss it moment Zack was little more than a flashback in the FFVII original, a mentor to a youngen known as Cloud Strife.

In Crisis Core he holds all the traits we've come to expect from our FF heroes. He's a moody little up-start, mouthing off, slacking, perplexed by just about everything and he has the "attention span of a little puppy". And don't forget that product filled spiky do.

Working his way from a 2nd to 1st

class SOLIDER operative he has a lot on his plate. Watching friends become deserters, being hated by the Wutai and people in the street, having a young Yuffie to try beat the crap out of him and discovering secrets about his comrades like the legendary Sephiroth, who the girls on the streets of Sector 8 proclaim to be "so dreamy". Who are they kidding?

Scandal is afoot with two 1st class SOLIDER boys going missing, Zack's mentor Angeal disappears shortly after Genesis, his long time friend, clones start popping up everywhere. When in doubt bomb the crap out of everything and hope no one notices.

As Zack is faced with the harsh reality of what Shinra and SOLIDER really stand

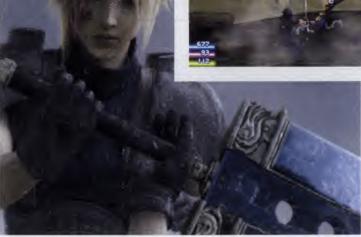


PlayStation









for and begins to carve through numerous clones of 1st class SOLIDER Genesis, he also grows strong bonds with old favourites in Cloud and Aerith. Taking the story from the war with the Wutai through to the happening in Nibelheim. where we know a not so happy ending await him.

SPIN THAT WHEEL

The battle system is made up of a bit of the old and a large chunk of the new. Gone are the random battles, so you're ready when you see some marauding group standing high on the hill but those inexperienced with the series may find the first encounter with a summons a little overwhelming.

Targeting is simple, just turn towards your intended enemy, it makes the combat easy to pick up but can feel a little hack and slash at some points, especially if you're not on the hard setting.

Shoulder buttons let you select your move, be it attack with sword, magic or items. Victory can come down to mashing the X button with much gusto.

The weirdest new feature is the pokies wheel in the top left hand corner, the Digital Mind Wave (DMW). You don't have to understand how it works because it pretty much runs itself. It does have a random feel to it and if you're like most people, and you are paying attention to gaining victory in the battle, it may take you by surprise but sometimes it will also save your butt. What it does do is level up your character and launch Limit Breaks known as Power Surge!

The reels, six in all, rotate independently when the left and right portraits line up a limit-verge screen appears where you wait to see if the numbers and the centre portrait line-up. All three portraits give you a Limit Break with dramatic flare. All three numbers, you level up or make you invincible.

Also returning is Materia, small spheres of 'spiritual energy', which fully customisable allow the player to cast magic spells and fuse together abilities

or create new materia. Equipping Materia determines the commands you can use in battle, available in the menu on the bottom right hand corner.

NIBELHEIM RETURNS

Devoted fans or one off visitors to the series have all experienced one thing, long cut scenes, and love them or loath them they are nothing short of stunning, the first time. Unfortunately, you can't skip through these scenes even when re-watching. So, after a mammoth moment, SAVE the game as soon as possible in case of a swift and painful death and avoid another 10 to 15 minutes. There is more than a reference to Final Fantasy: Advent Children here, with dramatic switching camera angles and extreme close-ups to set the mood.

Side missions are available at the Save point and well worth taking on to level up and for cameos from old favourites. It also works to draw out the length of the game from 10 to 12 hours to over 20 hours of gameplay.

With your final destination the town Nibelheim and only FFVii ahead of you it might be time to pull out and dust off the old PSone discs. Let's hope they just don't plan too many more spin-offs!

♣ Vanessa Morgan

THE FACES OF **CLOUD STRIFE!**



Nomura's original design! The high vaist is balanced by the big sword



Ah! Our little boy grew up so fast in Advent Children, especially in Edge



PROS:

- Testosterone filled story
- Visually striking

CONS:

- Battles often too easy
- No control of DMW system

VERDICT: Perfect portable package for RPG lovers actively packed with big sword moments.



DVD, Blu-ray and Cinema

FILM

We get to the heart of things with our favourite serial killer Dexter, race to the North Pole with Clarkson, rescue Christians with Sly and get a little fornication on in Cali. What else could you ask for?



DVD OF THE MONTH

DEXTER: SEASON ONE (MA15+)

STARRING: Michael C Hall, Julie Benz, Jennifer Carpenter,

Erik King, David Zayas and James Remar



splatter expert for

Born from the warped perception of Jeff Lindsay comes Dexter, a disturbing anti-hero whose hypnotic stream of consciousness and robust sense

of humour thrust his creator into the spotlight, rocketing up the best seller's lists (with Dexter in the Dark) and helped secure a deal to bring his creation to life on the small screen. Dexter is a dark avenging angel who doles out his own brand of justice to the wicked. Detached from the 'human' experience and birthed in blood, evil consumed Dexter at a young age leaving him with urges that cannot be contained. With this Dark Passenger whispering sweet lullabies. his cop father, Harry, tempered Dexter to take care of those that slip through the judicial system, and more importantly, to not get caught. By day, Dexter is a blood

Miami Forensics, loving boyfriend to Rita and her kids Cody and Astor. By night, he's Dexter the Dark Avenger, whose victims find their final resting place as a drop of blood in his slide collection.

There's a new serial killer in town, and his skills may very well outstrip our beloved Dexter's. Known as the Ice Truck Killer, this maniac has dismembered several hookers around town and left them in bloodless, wrapped in neat little packages. It's up to our hero, his foul-mouthed sister and fellow officer Deb and the perpetually hard ass Sgt Doakes to solve this mystery, before another victim becomes his prey.

VERDICT: A remarkable ground breaking series. Exceptional performances all around, with Michael C Hall's a standout, making a disturbingly violent killer appealing. You empathize and sympathise with Dexter, and then hate yourself for it.







THE ANTI HERO ARRIVES

Who needs them touchy-feely, namby-pamby heroes, aye? We need guys who'll get the job done, no matter the cost.



SIN CITY

Marv takes drugs to prevent psychosis, yet still happily takes some razor wire and a hacksaw to his sweetheart's killer Kevin. The capper is loosening the tourniquets to let the dog finish the job.



PAYBACK

Porter gets cheated out of \$35,000, shot, and left for dead. It's time for a little payback! Cars and apartments explode, and dominatrix Lucy Liu goes to work on Mel's behalf.



TOMBSTONE

After watching his brothers get visiously attacked, retired good sheriff on a bad day, Wyatt Earp, goes ballistic. Ably backed up by Doc Holliday watch the shotgun pellets, spurs and pistols fly.



TRUE ROMANCE

To free his hooker girlfriend from insane pimp Drexl, Clarence Worley endures a pistol-whipping beat down, just to to shoot Drexl in the family jewels, and several other places.



THE LAST BOY SCOUT

Captured and beaten, Joe Hallenback can't take no more. After a goon pops him in the jaw twice while he's trying to light up a smoke, Joe smashes his nose into his brain with a single thrust.

TV

CALIFORNICATION: THE FIRST SEASON

(MA15+)

■ STARRING: David Duchovney



Edgy, intelligent, cynical and at times, insightful, this is a great comeback piece for former X-Files star David Duchovney. Playing author Hank Moody, his life has

taken a downward turn after losing his wife and having his beloved book bastardised into a 'Hollywood' movie he numbs the pain through wine, women and drugs. A brilliant supporting cast, and many not so cliché and risqué scenes make this a winner. Keep an eye out for Madeline Zima's (little Gracie from The Nanny) entrance as an overtly sexual schoolgirl with a mean left hook.

■ VERDICT: We had to take off one star for the ridiculous scenes of Moody's daughter performing with her band.



HORROR

DAY WATCH

(MA15+)

■ STARRING: Konstantin Khabensky, Vladamir Menshov and Valeri Zolotukhim



■ DIRECTOR:
Timur Bekmambetov

The second part of Sergei Lukyanenko's sci-fi trilogy about a war waged between the Light and Dark sides of The Others.

These mythical creatures (vampires, witches and sorcerers) came to an uneasy accord centuries ago. The Dark would police the Day, and the Light would take care of the night. A Romeo and Juliet story unfolds with lovers on both sides drawn into the middle. Toss in a dash of murder and questing for lost artefacts and all the bases are pretty much covered.

■ VERDICT: Director Timur

Bekmambetov rocked us with amazing action and impressive special effects in the first one, and this follow up doesn't disappoint.



ACTION

JUMPER (M)

■ STARRING: Hayden Christensen, Samuel L Jackson and Rachel Bilson

■ DIRECTOR: Doug Liman



How do you go from back-to-back awesome action-fests (*Mr. & Mrs. Smith* and *The Bourne Identity*) to this tripe? Shame on you Doug, shame. shame!!

Filled with hackneyed plot points, unexplained, under-developed characters and Sam Jackson as a peroxide blonde? All this manure revolves around a battle between Jumpers (guys who can teleport) and Paladins (guys who want to kill guys who can teleport). This puppy has WTF written all over it from start to finish, and even the hotness of Rachel Bilson cannot save it.

■ **VERDICT:** We learnt that Hayden Christensen can't carry a film, after the *Star Wars* prequels, this is no different.





THOUGH THE FIRST SEASON HAS BARELY HIT THE SMALL SCREEN LOCALLY, THE STATES IS GEARING UP FOR THE THIRD SEASON OF *DEXTER*, READY TO KICK OFF LATE SEPTEMBER. WITH OUR LUCK WE SHOULD GET IT AROUND 2012...SIGH...

ADVENTURE

THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA: THE LION, THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE (FG)

■ STARRING: Georgie Henley, Skandar Keynes, Anna Popplewell, William Moseley, Tilda Swinton and Liam Neeson

■ DIRECTOR: Andrew Adamson



Ok, we know it's been out for a while, but we thought we'd whack it in as a precursor to the sequel, hitting cinemas right now. An innocent game of

hide and seek leads four siblings through a portal into a land of magic and wonder, caught in the throes of an evil mistress known as The White Witch. The four come to terms with the part they each play in freeing Narnia. Every mythical creature and animal is stunningly rendered from Centaurs to Griffins to Cyclopes...oh my!

■ **VERDICT:** Runs rings around The Golden Compass, Eragon and other such flicks. A timeless classic retold spectacularly.



COMEDY

JUNO (M)

■ STARRING: Ellen Page, Michael Cera, Jennifer Garner and Jason Bateman

■ DIRECTOR: Jason Reitman



A deep-seated love of Rock, old school schlock horror movies and speaking her mind at, usually, the most inopportune moments have made teenage Juno a wee bit of

an outcast. Confronted with an unplanned pregnancy from her first sexual encounter, sassy and eccentric Juno decides to keep her baby. Rather than opt for abortion, she opts for adoption, meeting a mismatched couple going through there own problems. Funny, sharp, harsh and honest, this is Superbad for chicks, but dudes will get a lot out of it as well.

■ VERDICT: Knockout performances, particularly from Garner and Cera, and a whole lot of heart make this one a winner.

TV

TOP GEAR: THE GREAT ADVENTURES – POLAR SPECIAL (PG)

■ STARRING: Jeremy Clarkson, Richard Hammond and James May

■ DIRECTOR: Nigel Simpkiss



Those lovable, madcap rogues under the guise of motor enthusiasts are back to put the whinge back into whinging Pom and get your jaws dropping at their

latest escapade. It's a race to the North Pole with Jeremy and James in a kitted out in a suped up and kitted out Toyota Hilux, sporting some of the chunkiest tyres we've ever seen, versus Richard being dragged every inch of the way by a pack of dogs on a sled. It's old school vs. new school to see who can tame this icy region and come out the victor.

■ **VERDICT:** Treacherous conditions and the sheer willpower of the guys to make their mark, and win the race makes this an extremely entertaining iouride



SO I MARRIED AN AXE MURDERER (M)

STARRING: Mike Myers & Nancy Travis
DIRECTOR: Thomas Schlamme



After many unsuccessful relationships, Charlie is ready to settle down, but is his new girlfriend out to get him, or is it all in his head?

VERDICT: Worth it just to see Mike Myers play his own Scottish father.

$\star\star\star$

MEN IN BLACK (M)

STARRING: Will Smith & Tommy Lee Jones
DIRECTOR: Barry Sonnenfeld



Agents Jay and Kay are part of a secret organization to protect us from the scum of the universe. The arrival of an intergalactic cockroach could spell the end of life as we know it.

VERDICT: Great family fun. Smith and Jones bounce well off each other.

SWEENEY TODD – THE DEMON BARBER OF FLEET STREET (MAIS+)

STARRING: Johnny Depp

DIRECTOR: Tim Burton



Bloodbath or musical? Wrongly imprisoned Sweeney vows revenge on the society that turned it's back on him, and lead to his family's demise.

VERDICT: So ridiculously over the top, it works.



UNBREAKABLE (M)

STARRING: Bruce Willis & Samuel L Jackson

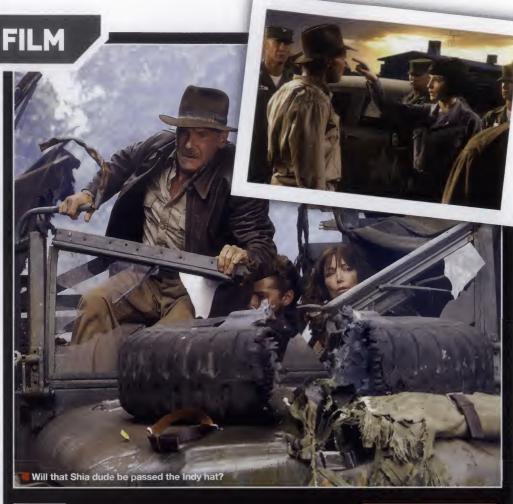
DIRECTOR: M. Night Shyamalan



A brilliant reinvention of *Superman*, has Bruce Willis taking up the mantle,but how does Elijah Price fit into the scheme of things?

VERDICT: Severely underrated and arguably Shyamalan's best work to date.





CINEMA

INDIANA JONES AND THE KINGDOM OF THE CRYSTAL SKULL

(M15+)

- **DIRECTOR:** Steven Spielberg
- **STARRING:** Harrison Ford, Cate Blanchett, Karen Allen and Shia LaBeouf

ow before all you smarty-pants out there start thinking "hey, didn't they look at Indy last issue?" yeah, we did. But you know what? After seeing it, we reckon it deserves a double dose of feature cinema goodness. Sure he moves a little slower, sounds a little rougher and it's a Cold War party against ze Ruskies instead of ze Germans, but you know what? We didn't give a crap! From the second you see Indy's silhouette against the US Army vehicle, you'll feel like you've slipped on an old pair of shoes. We won't talk about the ludicrous premise, but if you consider the pedigree of the Ark of the Covenant, Sankara Stones and the Holy Grail, it oddly works. Shia LaBeouf does his best Marlon Brando impersonation and actually takes up the baton rather nicely, as does Cate Blanchett as the psychic and psychotic villain. Can you feel the awesome?



COMING SOON

GET SMART (PG)

Agent 86 is back with a brand new adventure. Assisting the superstar Agent 23 (played by The Rock) and backed up by the dead sexy Agent 99 (Anne Hathaway), these three heroes will go head to head with the evil forces of KAOS.

Opens July 3rd

THE LOVE GURU (RATING TBC)

Raised in an Indian ashram after being abandoned by his parents, Pitka returns to the US to bring his message of love and spirituality to the masses. He's hired to help repair a hockey star's marriage and bring the team's dream of a Stanley Cup win to fruition.

THE FORBIDDEN

KINGDOM (RATING TBC)

Starring: Jet Li, Jackie Chan
When a mystical staff teleports
a young kung-fu junkie to
Ancient China, he learns it is
his destiny to return the staff
and save the kingdom from a
vicious overlord. It marks the
first team up of Chan and Li,
with fight choreography by
Woo-Ping Yuen of The Matrix.

BUZZ

The latest movie murmurs from home and abroad



MAD MAX WITH BOOBS

Any of you out there who have seen *The Descent*, will know that director Neil Marshall has a penchant for uber hot

babes carrying out excessively violent acts, with liberal doses of blood and gore thrown in for good measure. He's following this up with *Doomsday*, part horror, part *Mad Max*, all badass. The lead is the super sexy, spandex clad Rhona Mitra who is putting her ex-tomb raiding skills to good use in this neofuturistic bloodbath.



NO JAR-JAR PLEASE!

We've just learned that Star Wars: The Clone Wars (CG series bridging the gap between

going to kick off with a full-length feature film, hitting cinemas late August. The original animated shorts that aired as web-isodes were a cut hit, and nicely expanded the *Star Wars* universe. They delved into the corruption on Anakin by The Emperor and featured a Sith apprentice trained by Count Dooku. We're hoping lightning will strike twice here. Keep your fingers crossed.



IRON SKY

In the craziest idea for a film we've heard in a while (not counting anything by Uwe Boll) comes Iron Sky. In

and transported large numbers of soldiers and equipment to colonise the dark side of the moon. It's now 2018 and the goose-steppers are coming home to roost! This dark, sci-fi comedy is getting massive coverage on the interveb and has cult classic written all over it!.



PONCE OF PERSIA

When we heard the news, we died a little inside. Jake Gyllenhall has been cast as the lead in *Prince of Persia*:

Sands of Time, the big budget Bruckheimer/Disney spectacular. Lets mull over that one for a second. All American jock plays Middle Eastern prince. That makes sense. We were holding out for Oded Fehr from Deuce Bigalow and Resident Evil Extinction, but hey, what the hell do we know?

MAKE THE JUMP TO FTL WITH SCI-FI NOW!



TIPS & CHEATS

BURNOUT PARADISE

Burnout just keeps on getting better and better and Burnout Paradise is not just the best game in the series so far, it's a powerhouse game that demonstrates just what the PlayStation 3 is capable of. The online play is fast and furious but before we get to that, let's just cover off the basics, shall we?



Locations

There are 32 special locations (Gas Station, Junkyards, Paint Shops and Repair Shops) in Paradise City. To add them to your map, simply drive on by.

Gas Stations

There are 14 Gas Stations in Paradise City. Drive through a Gas Station and your boost meter will be completely refilled.

Junkyards

There are four Junkyards in Paradise City. Junkyards allow you to switch cars, and when you win a new car it will appear there. You can also change paintjobs on most cars at a Junkyard, but you'll need to repair them first.

Paint Shops

There are three Paint Shops in Paradise City. To repaint your car, drive it through a

Repair Shops

There are 11 Repair Shops in Paradise City. Simply drive through a Repair Shop to restore your car to an undamaged condition. You can use each repair shop only once during an event.

Basic Techniques

There are a number of basic Burnout techniques you'll need to master if you want to get that Elite license: Barrel Rolls, Boosting, Drifting, E-brake Turns, Flat Spins and Takedowns.

Barrel Roll

These can be tricky to land, but they're awesome once you get the hang! Throughout Paradise City you'll notice ramps that are raised higher on one side. You need to hit these at speed and position your car so only one set of wheels (on one side) goes over. Your car will rotate as it flies through the air - but landing is the hard part. The trick is to use a Stunt class car, jump over a drop-off or just hit the ramp at an insane rate of knots. Good luck with that.

Boost

Boost is critical to your success in Burnout: the extra hit of speed it delivers can mean the difference between glory and shredded metal. Each class of car's Boost meter behaves differently:

Aggression: Aggression cars have a red Boost meter. To fill it, hit things. Takedowns fill it completely and successive Takedowns will give you multiples of Boost (to a maximum of 3x).

Speed: Speed cars have a yellow Boost meter and it can only be used when it's full. To fill it, drive against the oncoming traffic, score lots of near misses and drift through turns. Though the Speed Boost bar is short, you can perform a Burnout; keep boosting after the meter runs out and you'll regain some Boost, which you can rebuild in the normal way until the meter fills and you can Boost again... and Burnout again... and again...

Stunt: Stunt cars have a green Boost meter and it can be used at any time. To fill it, perform stunts - do jumps and e-brake turns, get air time, boost down rough roads, drive against the oncoming traffic, that sort of thing.

Whilst driving at an irresponsibly high speed through a corner, tap the brake and spin the wheel to start your car drifting - then put your foot down and steer your chariot on through to the other side. Always good for a laugh.





E-brake Turn

A handbrake turn with a funny name; just hit the button to spin your car. Very handy for tight turns and quick getaways.

Flat Spin

Hit a ramp at high speed and just as you're about to go off the edge, do an e-brake turn. This will initiate a Flat Spin. Like Barrel Rolls, your best bet is to hit a ramp at very high speed or on the edge of a drop.

Takedown

Now this is what Burnout is really all about: reducing your vehicular rivals to clouds of metallic confetti. All you really need to do is slam into another car hard enough to send it careening out of control into the Armco, traffic or scenery, but to be truly effective (and to minimise damage to your own wheels) you'll want to maximise the carnage; hold an opponent in place with a

barrier or oncoming vehicle approaching; nudge the back corner of a turning car: or just smash right on in, T-bone style. It's all good.

There are three car classes in Burnout Paradise: Aggression, Speed and Stunt. Each has its own characteristics and the Boost meter for each functions differently. Here are some tips.

Aggression: Aggression cars are built to destroy, and are your best bet in Road Rage and Marked Man missions. They're heavy and don't handle or accelerate very well, making them unsuitable for Races and Stunt runs.

Speed: Speed cars are built to fulfil one need, and one need only: the need for... In practical terms they're even more narrowlyfocused than Aggression cars - they're good for Races and that's about it. But

moving and are of course the ideal choice for a Stunt Run. They're pretty good in Races and are your best friend when smashing Billboards and making Super Jumps.

Challenges

Burnout Paradise has a bunch of things to do, with events to suit every taste. Whether you like smashing things up or just driving really fast, there's plenty to enjoy. Just make sure you know how to get from A to B, and where all the special locations (especially Gas Stations and Repair Shops) are along the way.

Marked Man

To win, you must survive. Use as many shortcuts as you can and don't worry too much about your speed. Aggression cars will help you survive the carnage, but you might also want to try a Stunt car, especially if you're one for the jumping and spinning and short-cutting.

Race

Take a Speed or a Stunt car when you go racing. You'll need to be confident of your route, so if you're not, stick with the leaders as closely as you can. Once you make a break for the lead stay cool and don't blow it on the home stretch. There are only eight finishing lines in the whole game, so it's worth spending some time learning the roads that lead to them.

Road Rage

Speed is not of the essence in these events - your appetite for destruction is the key. Take your time and repair your car (Aggression class, if you please) and you'll have those black cars smashed to bits in no time.

Stunt Run

Stunt cars only need apply. Seriously. The

e-brake turns and boosting. Crashing ends your chain, so drive carefully. Well, not too carefully.

Other Challenges

These challenges don't give you points towards your license. They're just good, clean, honest, vehicular homicidal fun. Billboards: Paradise City has 120 Billboards to break. If you're doing a stunt to get to it, you don't need the stunt to be successful - you just have to smash the Billboard. A Stunt car with a big boost meter is the weapon of choice.

Power Parking: To Power Park, you need to do an e-brake turn and come to a stop between two parked cars. You can't have any wheels on the sidewalk and you need to be pretty much parallel to the curb. The best way is to approach from an angle and skid into place. Remember: practice makes perfect.

Road Rules: Showtime: Each street in Paradise City has a dollar score to beat. Get started with an Aggression car, a full Boost meter and a bad attitude. Hit as many buses as you can and keep an eye on the values of the undestroyed cars around you - so you can aim for the expensive ones.

Road Rules: Time: Each street in Paradise City has a Time to beat. For long roads, use a Speed car and boost. For shorter roads, use a Stunt car and get a good run-up..

Smashes: There are 400 Smashes in Paradise City - the fences with yellow lights that mark extra shortcuts, tunnels, ramps, rooftops... all the good stuff. Just drive on through and smash them!

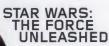
Super Jumps: Fifty super jumps. Doesn't sound like many, but some of them are real doozies! Look for the ramps with flashing lights. Each area of the city has ten jumps, and you've got to land the jump for it to count. Good luck, amigo.

DATABASE

All the games that matter on **PS3!**

FUTURE WATCH

The PS3 games to grab in the coming months



Release: TBA 2008

We had quick run through of this game very recently, and after being initially impressed, then subsequently let down by the lack of solid information regarding this game, we're right back up to being hyped. The euphoria engine that fuelled *GTA IV* is in full effect, *and* you

LITTLEBIGPLANET

Release: Late 2008

get play as Darth Vader.

Although we suspect that LittleBigPlanet is one of those games that we won't fully comprehend until we have the controller in our trembling hands, we can't help but get excited about Sony's upcoming harbinger of infinite user created content. From our short time with the

game we can say, however, that the actual core mechanics of the game, are amazingly fun, and match the scope of the customisation. Can't wait.

FRACTURE

Release: TBA 2008

Another game that initially had us a little worried, mainly due to its generic main character (another bald space marine...) but we changed out minds after having a quick run through of a mindblowing tutorial level. Main points? Ground

deformation is not a gimmick and is actually a pretty innovative game mechanic that can be used to create cover and solve puzzles. Colour us impressed.

RESISTANCE 2

Release: TBA 2008

The more details that start to trickle in regarding Sony's newest franchise, the more bodily fluids we excrete in anticipation of what is fast becoming the FPS release of the year. All the flaws from the original rectified, the largest multiplayer contests ever seen, and

a seperat co-op online mode that allows eight players to duke it out with the chimera in conjunction. Sounds pretty bloody incredible to us. Christmas can't come soon enough.

PS3 TOP 20

AS

ASSASSIN'S CREED

A landmark in gaming history. Nothing short of awe-inspiring. The missions are samey, but navigating open-worlds will never be the same. The biggest leap since GTAIII.



UNCHARTED: DRAKE'S FORTUNE

The best PlayStation exclusive on the market and the best looking console game to date. Frankly, *Uncharted* rocks up to the party and just plain owns everything...



CALL OF DUTY 4

Relentlessly exciting. Includes a dizzying variety of combat scenarios and stacks of bleeding-edge military hardware. You'd have to be insane, or a girly-man, to miss it.



ROCK BAND

The best party game ever and a triumph in every department, with a killer set list and rad instruments. You wanted the best; you got the best – Rock Band rocks.



MOTORSTORM

Fast, hard, dirty and utterly exhilarating, MotorStorm is essential for everyone's PS3. Not even the lack of split-screen can detract from this fantastic racer.



RESISTANCE: FALL OF MAN

The perfect launch title for PS3, and possibly the best console FPS ever made. The massive 40-player online deathmatches are more fun than you can imagine.



THE ELDER SCROLLS IV: OBLIVION

One of the deepest adventures we've everlaid eyes on. Simply put – awesome. This is arguably the only RPG you'll need for some time to come.



SKATE

A groundbreaking title that resets the bar for sports games in general. It kickflips *Tony Hawk*'s to the curb with its simple approach. Irresistibly addictive and downright essential.



WARHAWK

There is no better multiplayer game on PS3 right now. Tighter than a bull's arse on fight night and smoother than a glass of Guinness it's a superior piece of software.



BURNOUT PARADISE

Despite the lack of the old Crash Mode, the overwhelming majority of *Burnout Paradise* rocks harder than Slash during an epic guita solo. So fast, so wild.



HEAVENLY SWORD

Heavenly Sword is one of the best games we've seen in ages. A beautiful, yet deep, masterpiece and an awesomely enjoyable ride, albeit a rather short one.



GUITAR HERO III

Captures everything perfect about Guitar Hero with the best tracklist yet, but very nearly spoiled it all with the ridiculous new Battle Mode.



COLIN MCRAE DIRT

Colin McRae DIRT is an ambitious, accessible racer with a surprising amount of depth. The best rally sim ever? You better believe it. Rest in peace big guy.



THE DARKNESS

Tentacles and guns – the perfect combination. Stunning, original and gory as hell. You'd have to be dim to miss *The Darkness*.



STUNTMAN: IGNITION

The vehicular equivalent of a 10-hour-long orgasm. Gentlemen, start your boners. Stuntman: Ignition succeeds in upending the original in every way.



RATCHET & CLANK FUTURE: TOOLS OF DESTRUCTION

The biggest, wildest, most interesting, varied and downright gool ol' fashioned fun adventure these two have been part of.



THE ORANGE BOX

A stellar package; ripe, in season and packed full of vitamin value. If there isn't one title here that does it for you your gaming license is null and void.



RACE DRIVER: GRID

No V8s and no Australian tracks and it still rates up there with the best of 'em for the suped up cars, intensity and speeeeeeed! A very pretty package!



CONDEMNED 2

Takes everything that's good about an FPS and drags it, kicking and screaming, into a survival horror paradigm. Gripping stuff and well worth the price of admission.



SINGSTAR

SingStar will rule Friday nights for the foreseeable future. Should last as long as the PS3 does providing Sony pulls its finger out with more downloadable tracks.

A far better alternative to Mobile Suit Gundam.

BEOWULF

Has the dubious honour of ticking every game cliché.

BLADESTORM: THE HUNDRED YEARS' WAR

A solid mix of genres wrapped in an intriguing tale

BLAZING ANGELS II: SECRET MISSIONS OF WWII 6

Not quite the ace of aces at this stage.

CALL OF DUTY 3

A solid but surprisingly unspectacular shooter.

CLIVE BARKER'S JERICHO

Sick and twisted but not enough variety.

Compulsive and fun - one club you should join.

A bulldog of bloodletting, savage adventure and boobies.

DEVIL MAY CRY 4

A worthy entry into the series but the backtracking spoils it.

DEF JAM: ICON

Somehow it's won its way into our hearts. Stupid fun.

THE EYE OF JUDGEMENT

Impressive tech, but it's still a \$160 card game.

A chilling ride but the graphics are a bit of a shocker.

Finally puts FIFA on level terms with Pro Evolution.

FIFA STREET 3

The saviour for your multiplayer soul. Simple but fun.

FIGHT NIGHT ROUND 3

Boasts visuals that will knock the teeth out of you.

Great graphics, memorable characters. A sweet surprise.

FULL AUTO 2: BATTLELINES

Brims with potential but fails to live up to it.

GENJI: DAYS OF THE BLADE

Plodding gameplay that belongs on the Atari 2600.

THE GODFATHER: THE DON'S EDITION

Fine, but do yourself a favour and get the PS2 version.

THE GOLDEN COMPASS

Uninspired level design and dull quests make this a chore

HARRY POTTER & THE ORDER OF THE PHOENIX 6

Decent, but its chore-like structure will bore most.

JUICED 2: HOT IMPORT NIGHTS

A top bit of racing fluff, although it's all a tad generic

KANE & LYNCH: DEAD MEN

One part Hitman, one part Michael Mann; mostly a let down.

A massive let-down. It feels rushed and unfinished.

LOST PLANET: EXTREME CONDITION

Solid enough, but a lazy port and a visual let-down.





Quake - CrateDM3

Crates! You hide behind them, you blow them up but what happens when every player on the map is a crate and it's a death match!



Metal Gear Solid 4

It may not be gameplay but all we need to say is watermelons! That said how do will we fill the next couple of lines? Nice



Small title, mainly played by hardcore MMO fans but you may have heard of it. Its main function seems to be to provide box dreams



Portal

No. not because it was part of The Orange Box but the Aperture Science Weighted Storage Cubes we came to love through



Team Buddies Goofy RTS that demanded you stack crates in order to receive heavy weaponry. One crate weak, six crates

global domination

MADDEN NFL 08

Some great improvements and plenty of modes

MARVEL: ULTIMATE ALLIANCE

Great co-op and an exhaustive list of Marvel's greatest.

MEDAL OF HONOR AIRBORNE

A dinosaur of an FPS - wait for Brothers in Arms instead.

MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM: TARGET IN SIGHT

A rubber godzilla of a title. What a pipe blocker!

MX VS. ATV UNTAMED

Feels like a PS2 port, looks like a PS2 port. Disappointing

Fails to pick a side (sim or arcade) and so fails at both

Not as pretty as LIVE but has more depth.

NBA LIVE 08 Best of its kind. B-ball devotees will adore it, guaranteed.

NBA STREET HOMECOURT

The brashest, most addictive arcade basketball game yet.

NEED FOR SPEED CARBON

The last NFS street racer before the series went legit.

NEED FOR SPEED PROSTREET

Great smoke, but more depth would've been nice

NINJA GAIDEN SIGMA

A treasure trove of gaming goodness, super tough.

PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: AT WORLD'S END 6

A very shallow slash 'em up. Ye be warned

PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 2008

Still the best soccer in the biz, but the graphics are dire.

SEGA SUPERSTAR TENNIS

Enough with Sonic trying to best Mario.

SONIC THE HEDGEHOG

Mostly terrible. Avoid at all costs.

STRANGLEHOLD

Max Payne inspired action, plenty of frantic fun.

TIME CRISIS 4

Bi-polar, so stick to the arcade mode.

TOM CLANCY'S GHOST RECON: AW2

A tense, realistic shooter, but Rainbow Six Vegas is better.

TONY HAWK'S PROVING GROUND

Struggles to escape the shadow of SKATE

Packs plenty of bite but it's missing a few teeth.

UNREAL TOURNAMENT 3

Gorgeous and gory, but the lack of split-screen blows

UEFA EURO 2008

A possible contender for football game of the year.

VIRTUA TENNIS 3

Some of the best fun four people can have on one PS3.

WWE SMACKDOWN VS. RAW 2008

A solid entry. A few new additions but still plays the same.

MAGIC **MOMENTS**

Great moments in PlayStation history remembered!



THE GAME: Call of Duty 4 THE CONSOLE: PlayStation 3

THE YEAR: 20

THE MOMENT: Alright - so it's arguably a bit early for this one, but with much of the focus of this issue on the upcoming World at War we felt that it might be a good time to have look back at a moment in the franchise that embodies the magic that only Call of Duty can provide

The series is all about the spectacular set pieces and incredible interactive story telling. While this can sometimes result in a linear experience, there is no doubt that experience

is nothing short of exhilarating. Choosing just one of these heart stopping moments from Call of Duty 5 is a tough task, but after due consideration we all agreed upon one moment in the game that had us all cowering, inches away from soilage, on the

very edge of our seats. We are referring, of course, to the flashback mission, where players finally got the opportunity to play as grizzled SAS veteran Captain Price. Thing is, in lieu of the fact that the mission is a 'flashback' Price isn't exactly a veteran when you play as him.

As a humble lieutenant Price is tasked with serving under Captain MacMillan on a sneaking/sniping mission that will blow your tiny mind. With incredible light and shadow effects flickering at a radiant 60 frames per second, following MacMillan through an entire platoon of enemies is consistently jawdropping, and crawling past a tank, flanked by a squad of troops is as tense as it gets.

And then there's the sniping section - it's as simple as firing on a target, but the set up, and the context, makes it seem way more significant. In many ways it's as perfect an integration of gameplay and narrative we've seen in a videogame to date. Keeping track of the wind, and the changing conditions made the shot seem all the more significant.

If there's anything, even a single solitary moment, that manages to live up to that stell ar sequence of events, then we'll be more than satisfied.

Taking a look back at the best in the business.

RETROSPECTIVE

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THE COLD WAR JUST GOT HOT!

Still the best-damned squad based shooter ever

he year? 2003. Hot off the heels of Hitman 2, IO Interactive took a departure from its beloved assassin and had a looksee into team based mayhem and alternate timelines. Just imagine if those sneaky Cossack bastards (apologies to all our Russian readers) had cracked the secrets of the Abomb first back in WWII and, say, dropped one on the US of A, aye? History would have played out a lot differently wouldn't it? The USSR has invaded and wants to bring American to its knees and embrace communism. A huge military presence occupies New York and it's up to you to defeat the Red Menace.

THIS AIN'T MARIO BROS

As ordinary plumber, Christopher Stone, armed with only a wrench, you seek out the resistance to help save your captured brother. Through a series of events you are recruited to free New York from the hordes of soldiers, and Communist propaganda that is polluting television and the airwaves. The rebels survive in sewers, the city has been decimated, and resembles a war zone. Each territory has objectives to meet, and the order in which each is completed has a follow on effect (see FORK IN THE ROAD). As you knock each one out

your charisma level increases (punctuated with a real hoorah America "YEAH!!!"). This allows you to enlist more soldiers to the cause, which is easy, as they congregate on every street corner like hookers. You start out with just a couple, but in the later stages you can have up to twelve brothers in arms ready to assault with reckless abandon, and that's where the game takes on a whole new dimension.

AMERICA! F#@% YEAH!!!

Freedom Fighters has the best Al seen in a shooter, bar none. Sounds like a bold statement? It's not. You issue your squad three basic commands of scout ahead, defend this position, or follow me. The genius of it, is you can give each soldier different orders. Imagine you come across a Russkie turret. You order six dudes to assault, leave four defending and providing cover fire, and two follow you as you outflank the enemy. It's amazing the depth these three simple commands give, but it's the Al interpretation that made this game a standout. Your squad are all aggressive, battle hardened soldiers and instinctively grab cover, flank, man turrets and never fire arbitrarily in the wrong direction or just stand there jumping into walls. The capper

was the enemy AI was just as sharp, which made for some really tense skirmishes, and constantly had you on the back foot.

Freedom Fighters was the most damned fun we'd had in ages, and never really gained that much attention, which is a freakin' shame. Do us a favour and get yourself a copy on Ebay, or better yet, petition EA and IO Interactive to make Freedom Fighters 2 so you can all have a bite of the apple.











FORK IN THE ROAD

Lets say you need to storm a Police Station, take out a heli-pad and blow up a power station to liberate a section from Russian control. On route to the power station you're constantly getting axed by Apache helicopters, and you're team is taken out. Taking out the chopper first with a little C4, prevents air assaults in the other two sections. It adds a nice dose of strategy to some frantic running and gunning.



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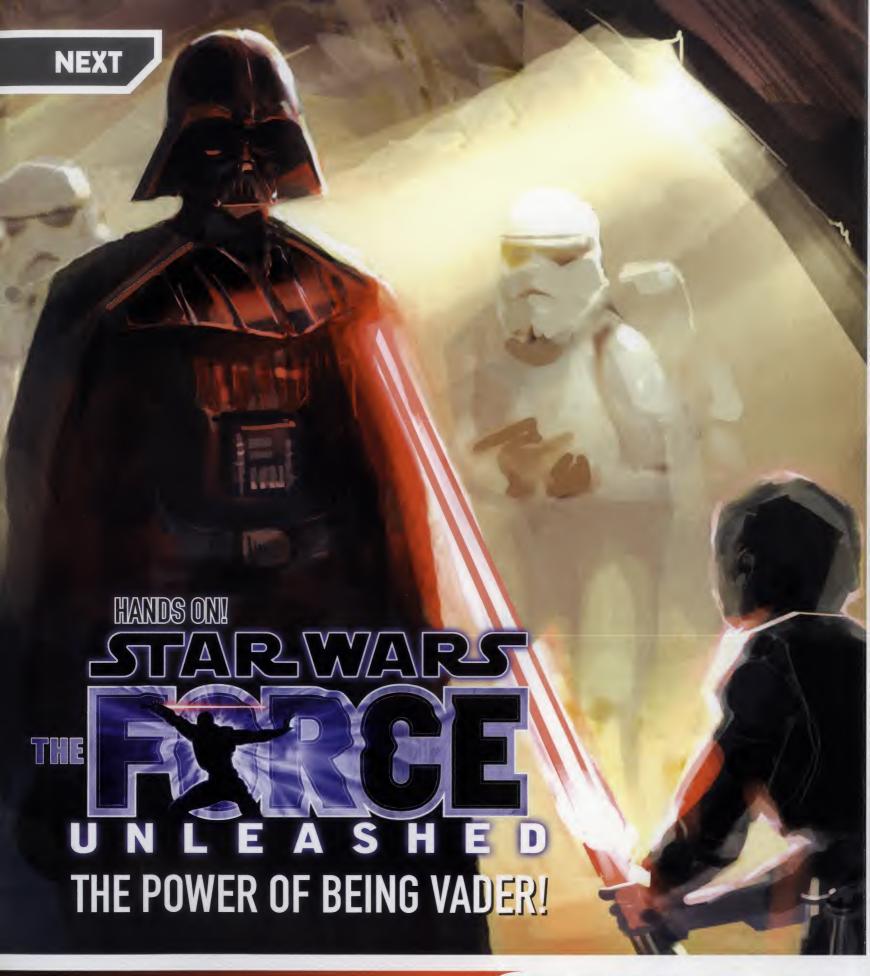


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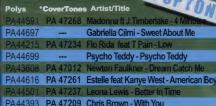












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